

CONTENTS.

APRIL—JUNE, 1944.

POETRY—	PAGE
TWO POEMS. By TIMOTHY WHARTON	I
SCENE-SHIFTER DEATH. By MARY DEVENPORT O'NEILL	2
BLIND HARRY (The Pioneer Explains). By CHARLES WEEKES	3
THE JEWELLER. By EMILY HUGHES	5
THREE POEMS. By L. V. O'NEILL	6
WILLIAM LARMINIE. By JOHN EGLINTON	12
THE ISLANDMAN. By DESMOND CLARKE	17
ON THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION AND THE GENESIS OF POETRY. By J. LYLE DONAGHY	27
TOLSTOY AND A RUSSIAN GENERAL. By DENIS IRELAND	32
THE VERSE PLAYS OF AUSTIN CLARKE. By VIVIAN H. S. MERCIER	39
DRAMATIC COMMENTARY. By A. J. LEVENTHAL	48
ART NOTES. By EDWARD SHEEHY	51
BOOK REVIEWS	55

The Editor of THE DUBLIN MAGAZINE will be glad to consider MSS. offered for publication, but no MS. will be returned unless it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope, and the Editor will take no responsibility for manuscripts that may be lost.

Letters should be addressed to 2 Crow Street, DUBLIN, and communications with regard to advertisements, subscriptions, etc., should be sent to the Manager of "The Dublin Magazine" at that address.

Price 2s. 6d.

Annual Subscription 10s. 6d. post free.

LONDON AGENT :

MESSRS. JOHN & EDWARD BUMPUS, LTD., 477 OXFORD STREET, W.I.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

THE DUBLIN MAGAZINE

VOL. XIX.—No. 2.
(New Series)

APRIL—JUNE, 1944.

Price 2/6

Two Poems by Timothy Wharton.

IN THE TIME OF LONG SHADOWS

In the time of long shadows,
Through the night, soft with summer,
Again she comes towards me,
White, rowan-slender

The steeples that point to the sky,
The high place of brightness,
Are conquered again by a sigh,
A mouth soft with silence.

For wisdom enraptured and lost
In the night's shadow-nimbus,
Again from the harvest I win
One sheaf of white beauty.

FOR MY FATHER

Now he is dead whose presence filled the world.
Death, grimly, has flung a stone into my impassioned heart
Stirring unfathomable wells of inexpressible love for this one man.

All the wild summer, its warm irrepressible laughter,
Echoed in that great heart whose close came kindly
As the benign night, as the grey benediction of dusk,
Ending, as an Angelus bell, his sun-lit day.

Forgetting him always, I turned, flinging my songs
 To the forests, or clouds, or winds; but they are not ours;
 For all their affinity, their beauty, their swift passing, they are
 not our folks:

One single garment of his, one memory now,
 Strikes at a fibre deeper at life's roots
 Than all God's splendour of oceans and lands and skies
 Can ever know.

What witchery died that hour? What charm of old Dublin
 With his going is gone forever from this beloved, old city?
 Light-hearted and bland he was, asking, receiving nothing, happy
 enough

If I stood by his side of an evening, man-shaped and comely . . .
 Blindly I turn where God with one brief gesture
 Has plucked from their fibres the mountains I thought eternal.

How often, at home, have I called through the closed doorways,
 With the reckless voice of a boy, "Are you there? Where are
 you, Father?"

Hearing that gay response, hiding his man's deep love—
 Now there is no response

Through the banged doors of darkness, the shut house of death . . .
 From the crest of the last dark hill, to the far, unassailable night,
 I wave a remote salute to this man that begot me.

SCENE-SHIFTER DEATH

By Mary Devenport O'Neill

As it is true that I, like all, must die,
 I crave that death may take me unawares
 At the very end of some transcendent day;
 May creep upon me when I least suspect,
 And, with slick fingers light as feather tips,
 Unfasten every little tenuous bolt
 That held me all my years to this illusion
 Of flesh and blood and air and land and sea.

I'd have death work meticulously too—
 Splitting each moment into tenths of tenths,
 Replacing each infinitesimal fragment
 Of old dream-stuff with new.

So subtly will the old be shed
 That I'll dream on and never know I'm dead.

BLIND HARRY

(*The Pioneer Explains*)

By Charles Weekes

"Blind Harry!" I heard him just mutter
 When he came to that part of his story
 Where the sickening stone pavements get up into
 wavements
 And the house-walls fall into the gutter
 And the debris is gory.

"Blind Harry!" Again, just a murmur,
 When he told how the Hwang-ho in flood
 Wiped out a cool million (or was it a billion!);
 With something on rivers in Burma,
 And the Nile and the sudd.

"Blind Harry!" a third time; the fiery
 Red hell of the forest miles wide,
 Where the humans in fury and *ferae naturae*
 Were brought, with some pain, to expiry,
 And all of them died.

He was horrid. I tried to ignore it;
 But he troubled my soul about death:
 I felt I must find who it was that was blind:
 I felt that I had to explore it.
 After sighing a breath—

He smiled and replied (oh, quite human!):
 'You would call him the Spirit of Evil,
 Or perhaps by a name that is—well, much the same;
 But you'll find, if you think with acumen,
 He's worse than the Devil.

- ‘ No passions nor parts has Blind Harry :
 He is deaf and he’s dumb and he’s blind :
 He gropes like a mole through the earth as a whole,
 And none of his doings miscarry,
 And all are unkind.
- ‘ He travels around without thinking—
 Just rootles his way to a front :
 He knows not of pity when down comes the city ;
 And then he is gone in a winking,
 With never a grunt.
- ‘ We millions know death when we know him,
 And we know him of old at a glance ;
 But he’s gone ere we’re able to lock up the stable,
 And so we can’t catch him and show him :
 Some call him Blind Chance.
- ‘ But how did he come into being
 To murder the brave and the good ?
 For, asking His pardon, if God made the garden,
 Who let in this damned one, unseeing,
 To fill it with blood ?
- ‘ The Fathers of old called him Satan,
 With the pictures of merry old Pan,
 And his hoof and his horn, the Christian to warn
 Against cardinal errors in matein’
 And all that they ban.
- ‘ But see how they shirked the main question :
 They looked at our follies and sins :
 God knows they’re enough to make the road rough,
 But for that (which ain’t my indigestion)
 I don’t care two pins.
- ‘ It’s the ’quakes and the floods and the ruddy
 Big blazes of timber I’ve seen ;
 And more as inane, which there’s none can explain,
 Make me say (where the others say “ Bloody ! ”)
 “ Blind Harry has been ”.

THE JEWELLER

By Emily Hughes

HERE he sits in his dark shop,
Peering through a microscope.

Bent his head and grey his hair,
All his face is lined with care.

How his fingers, smooth of joint,
Taper to a cunning point !

How the jewels burn and beam,
Glance and glitter, glow and gleam !

On a shelf above his head
All his friends are gathered.

A sword of silver, finely made,
With a jewel in the blade

Hangs upon the dusty wall
Where the spiders spin and fall.

Chalcedony in a jar
Where the ceiling shadows are

Flows like clouded buttermilk
Hard as agate, smooth as silk.

Crimson sunsets leap and die
Where the sullen rubies lie,

Rich and blue the sapphires burn,
Milky opals shift and turn,

As the buried roses glow
Underneath their upper snow ;

Lion-yellow in the gloom
 Topaz fires light up the room ;

Purple in the gathering dark,
 Amethysts in secret spark . . .

How the jewels flash and wink,
 Shine and beckon, nod and blink !

When the gaslight flutters on
 All their liveliness
 Is gone.

Three Poems by L. V. O'Neill.

THE SWALLOWS GO

OCTOBER dusk, and a wind that is not of summer
 Keens in the wires, where the Swallows
 Are quiet, now . . .
 Drowsed twitter, folded wing,
 Composure and high magical democracy.
 Black they look in the dimmit ;
 Like bars they look
 Of heady elfin music
 Scrolled in the nightfall sky,
 But they are painted blue
 Like cruel steel,
 Only these are not cruel, but very soft, and warm
 And very beautiful,
 Knowing it not—
 How their sweet throats
 Are scarved in chestnut,

Dyed with the azure of their own skies,
 Of infinite spaces,
 Inhuman swooning gulfs,
 The parquet of their wing-dance,
 Star-lanterned Valse Cosmopolite.

Last night they sat on the wires,
 And many a night on the wires,
 But this is their last night on the wires ;
 For to-night they are going away ;
 Quite simply going away—
 One might say, casually going away—
 From the wires to Africa.

Non-stop.

No fussification or even publicity
 Or leave-taking or heart-searching whatever.
 A whish of wings in the dark—so !
 And they are gone
 And nobody sees them go
 Or really knows anything whatever about it at all.
 It seems they are entirely self-sufficient,
 And nowise beholden to us :

Indeed they do not flatter us,

These swallows

That live in peace together

And breed them children that do not break their hearts

Oh, they are little robots, after all,

Determinate thingumbobs

Of feckless seasonal rhythm.

Granted, —but still

Their hearts are somehow pure ;

For God has done their thinking, long ago He did it.

And that is why

The clutch of Loss,

The sense of parting,

The haunting of disaster,

The ash-fruit of the Tree of Life

And all the stock-in-trade of misery

Eschews them quite,

Just will not condescend to them.

And that is why
 These birds that do not think at all
 Have neither lot nor part
 With man that roves
 For pauperhood or itching heart,
 Starvation or mere surfeit—
 Slovak, Irish or other
 Stepson of U.S.A.
 Dubious miserable step-child,
 Homo calamitosus
 Whose thinking is perfectly useless,
 Complete with cabin-trunk, hope, et praeterea nihil;
 Or Incroyable of the Promenade Deck
 Whose thinking is worse than useless,
 Circumlocutory Lothario
 Complete with flapper—
 Old Willow pattern, she,
 Or what you will
 Indeed.

And that is why
 They tempt the moaning
 Corpse-gray Biscayan waste,
 Assail with urgent beat
 The lone, high, shadow-fluted
 Sierra-land
 Estremadura,
 See tameless waters breach
 The Gates of Hercules,
 Dawn-carmined teeth of Atlas rim
 Prone Africa, while gradual unfolds
 Her tawny savagery, the lion-hided wastes
 Whose ancient potency still stirs
 Untaught desire,
 And calls from Munster hills
 Her wander-birds, to greet in dawn of homing
 The tilted desert and the desert moon
 And Moslem sea.

SLAVEY

In the strangers' house she lies,
 And the soft uncertain eyes
 Close on yet another day
 Of her dark untutored way ;
 Close on weariness, to find
 Refuge from the alien mind
 And with oblivion's coin redeem
 Comfort in the mart of dream.

—It comes. In phantom light, again,
 Born of yearning and of pain,
 Ills dim-comprehended, rise
 Buried days and other skies,
 Skies untainted, marbled gray
 Of a far autumnal day,
 Dove-rose, luminous and still,
 Brooding o'er the brooding hill,
 O'er the weaving water pale
 Quiet in the Munster dale,
 Where the tumbled crags are spilled
 And each ferny bowl is filled
 High with Autumn, and about
 Sprawls the oak in lusty rout
 With the rowan waving wild ;
 Where the lovely birch, beguiled
 To the black-silled lochan shore,
 Views her pale self, evermore.

She hears the quavering call of sheep
 Drift along the mountain—steep :
 She hears high-hearted fowls a-crow
 And little calves in chorus low
 Pleading through their withy gate,
 While with circumstance and state
 His turkey-folk their sultan fine
 Marshals to the roosting pine
 Whence guinea-cocks, a wailful crew,
 Exclaim upon the Kerry Blue.

See ! seven ducks, in love with life
 And heartiness and mire, arrive ;
 In squat procession bob and peer,
 Passing wise, of portly cheer.
 She hears the sudden untuneful crake
 His twin-song from the dark fields wake,
 And the vixen's trouble shrill
 Cry within the starlit hill,
 When the glen is hushed of all
 But the nightlong waterfall.

And she tosses, scene on scene,
 Through the shifting veils of dream—
 Things familiar, artless, poor,
 Love-begotten live once more ;
 Themes delightful, prized apart,
 Secret in the shadowed heart ;
 Things untrammelled, clear and brave,
 Voices heard across the grave . . .

But the dregs of London's night
 Dowse bright vision, wake dull sight ;
 And the flaring murk again
 Grins its travesty of pain
 Through the casement where she lies
 Heart-encumbered, and she sighs
 Listening to the mutter deep
 Of the city's shuddering sleep—
 Till the desolate deep-sea call
 Bellows through the vibrant pall,
 Monstrous, where the great ship rides
 London river, London's tides—
 Till the mournful tumult dies
 And a voice in kind replies
 As an engine's long-drawn cry
 Raves about the blinded sky,
 Screams of severance and farewell,
 All that feeds the human hell,
 All finality's despair—
 From some siding, God knows where . . .

BERE

THERE is no wind abroad ; The winter moon
Beyond the clotted vapour swims unseen.
The dead year's hand weighs chill ; the black firs lean,
Dreaming the sodden hours, of scented June ;
Dream through the trample and the trumpeting,
The ponderous and sullen shocks that heave
Where bull-voiced headlands, foamed in ghostly ring,
Roar to the headlong flail of midnight seas.
So shakes the dark tumultuous refrain
Through night and land. —But Daod, snow-helmeted
Dark chief of Western hills, bends ageless gaze
On gulfs moon-glazed, and sees through frozen space
The stars of half a world, the iron-ribbed
Long chine of Caha, and the Irish Main.

WILLIAM LARMINIE

By John Eglinton

IN one of Dostoevsky's stories, a group of men, talking over their past lives, agree that each of them shall relate that action of which he was most ashamed. It is perhaps possible to conceive of a game like this being played in Russia, in whose fiction everyone appears to be the victim of emotional sincerity, but even in fiction an English writer would hardly devise such a framework for his story. Confession is bad form, for it only makes others feel uncomfortable. Yet there are occasions when we are more or less confronted with our discreditable actions in the past, and when to conceal them is almost to repeat the offence; and in my own case a request to write something about William Larminie is such an occasion. I had been told that he was very ill, and as I was his intimate friend I called to enquire about him at his house in Prince of Wales' Terrace, Bray. "Yes, he was very ill; would I go up to him?" A sudden fright seized me, an anticipation of one's helplessness in a sick room—I made some excuse and turned away. When I next called he was dead, and I saw the nurse who said to me, "There was certainly something he wanted to say to you," Well, there is my confession, and I cannot say that I feel much better after making it. On the contrary, set down in black and white, the incident seems rather worse than I have felt it to be all these years since the end of last century. For one thing, I could hardly have realized that he was dying, and I did not know that he wanted to see me: he may have wished to give some directions about disposing of the MS. of his work on *Scotus Erigena*; his mother said he had been writing assiduously "at something" for some time before his illness. This MS. in any case came duly, I believe, into the possession of the National Library of Ireland.

Larminie was a tall handsome man, somewhat of the Parnell type, and he used to speak of a "three-cornered resemblance" between himself, T. W. Rolleston and George Coffey. He had a diffident manner, and looked at you with light-coloured, slightly amused eyes. He was a great walker and was always in shorts. Born I believe in County Mayo, in 1849, he spoke with a rich

though cultivated brogue. He had served for a good many years in a Government Office in London (I think it was in the Foreign Office), where one of his colleagues was Lionel Tennyson, son of the Laureate, and had made the acquaintance of Yeats and other Irish writers: he seems to have known Sir Samuel Ferguson, who died in 1886, for Seumas O'Sullivan tells me he has a book by Ferguson, presented to Larminie with the author's inscription. He used to talk of a friend called Lecky, with whom he had visited the Irish-speaking districts in the West, and between them they had obtained materials for his collection *West Irish Folk Tales* (1892), though neither of them knew Irish well enough to follow the narrators thoroughly as they told their stories; they met the difficulty by taking down the words as they sounded, making them out subsequently. The book impressed Hyde as a considerable feat, and I have heard him speak of Larminie as "the most under-rated man in Ireland." But Larminie had a loftier ambition than to be a collector of Irish folklore, and one day in London, to the discomfiture of his mother with whom he lived, he announced that he had given up his post in the Civil Service, though he had not yet qualified for a pension. "And how will you live?" she asked him, and he replied that he would write (they seemed in fact to live comfortably enough on their private means in their lodgings in Bray). With the beauty and quietness of Ireland all about him he was persuaded that as a poet he would be an interpreter of the Irish spiritual mystery. He had already published two small volumes of poems, *Glanlua* (1889) and *Fand* (1892), the latter of which reveals the kind of theme which attracted him in the Irish legends. It must be remembered that in the early 'nineties Irish literature was still a fairly open field, in which Irish writers had only begun to discern in folklore and legend the outlines of an ancient and consistent mythology, and that a knowledge of the Irish language was still a somewhat rare qualification. Yeats had now appeared on the scene, but was still dreaming of his epic on Cuchullin, and talking of Ferguson's "Conary" as the greatest Irish poem. Certainly Irish literature at this time seemed fully justified in aspiring to a development entirely its own. But politics intervened, distractions, centred chiefly as time went on in the activities of the Abbey Theatre. Irish literature has hardly followed the course dreamed of for it by Larminie.

His mother, a brilliant and picturesque old lady—Hyde called her “a terrible old woman”—never forgave him. She was an invalid and lay in her chair railing at him, praising poets like Kipling, who did things—I remember her concern when Kipling was ill with pneumonia—and contrasting the appreciative society they had enjoyed in London with their neglect in Bray. “He was the finest-looking man in any room he came into,” she would say, “and now look at him!” And Larminie would grin across the room. He was, I think, rather proud of her and of her decided opinions: she had a great admiration for Carleton, in comparison with whom she intimated that the new Irish writers were small fry. On Sundays I used to join him in his rambles, and we took long walks, round by Kilmacanogue or up the hills as far as King William’s Seat, a favourite objective with him. How many Irish poets have visited or even dwelt among these Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, vainly hoping to find in them the responsiveness and individuality of Skiddaw or Helvellyn. “Great things are done when men and mountains meet,” wrote the ever-astonishing Blake: but Irish poets have always been eminently social beings. There is no part of Ireland which offers a more suggestive equivalent to the English Lake District than the County Wicklow, with all its hills and valleys, but no poetic association mitigates the daunting melancholy of Glendalough; and Thomas Moore pays a very left-handed compliment to the Vale of Avoca in his famous song, where he is tactless enough to mention that it was not the “soft magic of streamlet and hill” that pleased him so much as that “friends the beloved of his bosom” were with him. Perhaps Larminie, a West of Ireland man, would have been better advised to have sought retirement in the Sligo region, over which the genius of Yeats has undoubtedly cast a spell; but Yeats himself shared in the gregarious disposition of most Irish poets, feeling lost without boon companions of either sex, and it was amid the cheerful hum of London that Rat Island achieved its immortal metamorphosis into Innisfree. A little later than this period of my walks with Larminie, a solitary figure might have been encountered in these glens and mountain-passes, that of J. M. Synge, stepping along in the guise of a tramp-naturalist and with the air of one who knew what he wanted; and finding it, not

on lonely eminences, but in chance-talks with companions on the road or in shabby inns—after which, going a little way along, he would pull out his note-book.

Larminie, for his part, though according to his mother he had been quite a social success in London, was finally a somewhat forlorn figure in Bray, where I have heard him characterized briefly as a “queer fish”: he was in fact a fairly normal, thoughtful, utterly unpretentious human being. With whatever disdain a poet may be armed against such comment, it inevitably throws him back upon himself too much. But more seriously inimical to a poet’s quiet self-acceptance is the friendly curiosity of neighbours in a provincial town about one’s doings, and it is this as much as anything which causes poets and artists to take refuge in the indifference of London or Paris to what you look like or fancy yourself. Thus he seemed acutely embarrassed one day when a sprightly young lady addressed him: “Oh, Mr. Larminie, you passed me on the road yesterday without noticing me, and I’m sure you were composing poetry!” Whatever the cause, the “return of the native” was in his case as complete a failure as in Hardy’s novel, and shortly before his last illness he confessed to me that time hung very heavily with him. Perhaps he was a martyr to filial duty: unlike Bernard Shaw who, in somewhat similar circumstances, though no doubt with far more justified self-confidence, had claimed the priority of an artist’s obligations to those of a son. In Dublin he might have found stimulating associates, but I think he was rather glad of the tie which kept him in Bray. Sometimes he was happy enough there, joining willingly for instance in little parties at the house of a relative of my own, where, in that rather mysterious parlour-game of levitation, I recall his amazement when we succeeded in raising him on our fore-fingers, big man as he was, an inch or so above the hearthrug. I have no clear memories of his talk; I remember him as good humouredly disputatious, just a little captious. It occurs to me now that I must have said things that jarred on his poetic susceptibilities, for I did not know his poems. He was fairly orthodox in his poetic tastes, belonging to a generation which had not yet thrown over Tennyson: I remember him for instance praising Tennyson’s “Two Voices” as taking account of “every possible theory of immortality.”

Larminie's poetry, like Larminie himself, does not force itself upon one: it has to be sought out by the curious in two small volumes hard to come by. AE, a discerning critic, though rather of a poet's intention than of his execution, thought highly of it; and Larminie's intention is always noble. One of his few short poems, "The Nameless Doon," has found its way into anthologies.

Who were the builders? Question not the silence
That settles on the lake for evermore,
Save where the seabird screams, and to the islands
The echo answers from the steep-cliffed shore.
O half-remaining ruin, in the lore
Of human life a gap shall all deplore
Beholding thee; since thou art like the dead
Found slain, no token to reveal the why,
The name, the story. Someone murdered
We know, we guess; and gazing upon thee,
And filled by thy long silence of reply,
We guess some garnered sheaf of tragedy;
Of tribe or nation slain so utterly
That even their ghosts are dead, and on their grave
Springeth no bloom of legend in its wildness;
And age by age, weak-washing round the islands,
No faintest sigh of story lips the wave.

The employment of assonance here is unobtrusive, and will be hardly noticed; used in this way, nothing can be said against it. Larminie however, held that assonance might be generally adopted in Anglo-Irish poetry as a characteristic inheritance on the Irish side of its parentage, and he employed it at length in *Fand*. The result was hardly successful. Assonance, which in any case is of the nature of rhyme, can be no substitute for it, and in English poetry a determination to avoid the full rhyme is displeasing to the ear which listens for it. As to the argument that the rhyming resources of English poetry are worn out or exhausted, poems continue to be produced in the English language which prove that this is not a fact.

THE ISLANDMAN

By Desmond Clarke

THE Islandman came zig-zagging down the mountain from his shelter high on Craughan, a shelter built of thick sods of earth and grass, roofed over with two sheets of galvanised tin, and bedded, deep and thick, with bracken and mountain moss.

He was a tall thin angular man, young and loose-limbed. His face, firm and unsmiling, was bronzed a deep brown and weather-beaten; a tousled mass of black curly hair waved in the breeze like the unclipped mane of a young filly.

He was dressed like a fisherman in a thick loose fitting jersey of navy blue with a high collar reaching to his chin, and long sleeves doubled over his wrists. He wore rough grey homespun trousers, the seams thick like pieces of rope. The pampooties on his feet were wet with the morning dew.

He came to the pier sheltering the small unused harbour at the foot of the mountain, a pier jutting out to the sea shaped like a large crooked L. He stood still for a while, shading his eyes against the bright glare of the early morning sun thinly suspended over the distant blue water, and watched the cork markers of his line bob gently up and down.

The morning was very quiet and still; the little village across the bay was asleep. As yet no smoke poured from the blackened chimneys of the cottages huddled closely together. Along the beach upturned curraghs lay, their black bottoms to the sky like a line of giant beetles asleep.

Quite suddenly he jerked his head to one side, and screwed his eyes tightly together for the noisy agitated flight of a flock of gulls disturbed the calm peace of the morning. He watched the gulls pour from the cliffs in a great stream and wheel excitedly over the sea. He followed their flight to where they wheeled and gathered in a mass, and then he saw a moving patch of sea bubble up like a boiling pot. The gulls wheeled and circled over it, and screaming loudly dived, one after another, into the water.

The mackerel shoal moved quickly round the rocky head. The young man watched the sea and gulls for a while longer then he nodded his head thoughtfully up and down, a faint

sarcastic smile gathering at the corners of his tight mouth. He turned and looked over at the sleepy village, then at the upturned curraghs on the beach, and the long nets hanging from upright poles.

He dropped lightly from the pier and walked across the shingle, his long arms swinging loosely by his side. His small curragh lay in a bed of stones close to the water's edge. Deftly he turned it over and dragged it into the sea, the water swilling about the end of his trousers and covering his feet. Carefully he manoeuvred round the end of the pier out into the shafts of golden light that cut deeply through the water revealing the rocky weed covered bottom.

A quarter of a mile out the row of corks bobbed gracefully up and down in line. The Islandman slew the curragh round in a wide sweep and brought it to the end of the line. Very carefully he reached over the side and drew the first pót into the boat. There were a few lobsters in it and he emptied them into the bottom of the curragh, returning the pot to the sea. The curragh drifted slowly along the line as he played it through his hand stopping just to take each pot and empty it.

The Islandman then rowed shore-wise. His face had grown softer, and he whistled quietly to himself. There was a fair heap of milling lobsters disentangling themselves in the bottom of his curragh. He stopped whistling and counted them roughly. Close on four dozen lobsters he had. They'd be worth at least sixpence apiece, maybe more for the fishermen reckoned it was a poor season, and blamed everybody and everything for it, everybody and everything but their own innate laziness.

The curragh grated once more on the shingle and the Islandman dragged it gently to its bed of stones. He gathered the lobsters into a sack, leaving aside those he considered too small and immature.

Across the bay the cluster of white cottages came to life. Smoke curled thickly from all the chimneys. The women were raking out the dead ashes, uncovering the still glowing embers and building a fresh fire for the day. Children had gathered about the open kitchen doors, and two young girls were milking tethered goats by the gable end of a cottage.

The young Islandman wiped his forehead on the back of his hand, and gathering his sack of lobsters over his shoulder

he climbed in a slow zig-zag fashion up the mountainside. Outside his sod-built cabin he made a fire of brushwood and dead bracken and brewed a can of strong tea. He ate a thick chunk of dry bread, washing it down with hot unskimmed tea. Then he rested.

The sun had moved round in the heavens when he came down the mountain again. There was plenty of movement in the village like an uncovered ants' nest. Only a few currachs still lay on the beach, the sun glinting brightly on their black bottoms. Many more were at sea moving quickly towards the shore, whilst far out a few were riding motionlessly like small specks on a polished board.

The Islandman, his sack slung across his shoulder, crossed the beach running by the village. The station, a dingy low-sized shed, lay further round and was slightly obscured by the cottages. The young man walked on, his head down. He looked neither to the left nor right, neither did he bid the time of the day to the men and women who watched him with cold unblinking eyes. He could feel the cold eyes on him and in his ears he could hear what they were saying about him; he could only partly understand them but he sensed their feelings deeply. He was an Islandman from Innishcloghan, and the sea, the sea that washed their shores, was their sea, their very own.

Yes, he was a foreigner to them, an outsider, a strange, unspoken, deep sort of fellow who lived for a few months each year in a sod-built shelter on the mountainside, snug in a hollow against the wind, with a bed of brushwood and dry moss to lie upon.

At the station gossiping fishermen hung about, their legs dangling from stacked empty mackerel cases. They were smoking and spitting and talking in loud deep voices. The Islandman walked past them and entered the low dark building smelling strongly of fish and brine.

The agent was in his shirt sleeves, standing at a desk, and writing with a stub of a pencil which he wet every now and then with his tongue. He was a big chested man, red faced and almost bald; he had a big belly held in with a thick leather belt, hole-punched every inch or so. He turned his head. "'Morrow," he said gruffly, and then "What have ye got to-day?"

The Islandman told him, and planted his sack on the wet concrete floor. He rubbed his numbed hand up and down the

course seam of his trouser. He stood painfully at ease whilst the agent opened the mouth of the sack and poked amongst the lobsters with a piece of stick.

"Not bad, not bad at all," he muttered to himself. Then he straightened up with a grunt and crooked his thumbs in the broad belt across his belly. "How d'ye manage it at all?" he asked queerly, and he looked hard at the Islandman.

The young man grinned foolishly, not quite understanding. The agent took the piece of pencil from behind his ear and sucked it for a moment or two.

"What are ye askin' for them?" he said, his eyes narrowing shrewdly, and his lips sucked into his mouth.

"Sixpence apiece," the Islandman told him.

The agent grunted and frowned a little.

"The lot for a pound—twenty shillings," the Islandman said.

"A tidy lot for lobsters, son. A tidy lot."

Three or four fishermen came in. They nodded in a friendly way to the agent. "What's he got?" one of them asked.

"A handy case of lobsters," the agent said.

The fishermen were silent then and stood about with their hands deep in their pockets.

The Islandman felt uneasy; he bent down and gathered the neck of the sack in his hands. "D'ye want them, mister?" he asked simply.

The agent took the sack from him. "Sure. Of course I want them. But, son, your price isn't reasonable, ye're askin' a bit much, aren't ye?"

The Islandman shook his head. For a moment he was at a loss for a word then he said, "They're scarce, very scarce."

The fishermen laughed loudly and one of them said in a hard voice, "Not so scarce with you, lad, eh?"

The agent was grunting and mumbling to himself. "A tanner apiece son? It's a bit steep, isn't it?"

The Islandman shook his head blankly.

One of the fishermen detached himself from the group and opened the sack. He poked a thick tobacco stained finger amongst the lobsters. The Islandman looked at him, his brow darkening and his mouth twisting to one side. The fisherman was grinning and looking at the agent. "Not worth a tanner apiece, Johnny. They're smalls," he said.

The other fishermen gathered round and mumbled together in deep voices. The Islandman, his face flushed, pushed them aside and gathered up the neck of the sack. "They're mine," he said warningly, and turning towards the agent he asked, "Are *you* taking them, mister?"

The fishermen stood back their eyes fixed darkly on him. "Ye're an uncivil bloody man," one of them said, and another said he should go back to the island he came from.

"Are ye takin' them, mister?" the young man asked again, and he dragged the sack towards himself.

The agent nodded. "I'll take them. A quid for the lot, an' if ye ask me anything it's a divil of a lot of money to be handin' out."

The Islandman hauled the sack across the shed and tipped the lobsters into a box. He could hear the fishermen whispering and mumbling among themselves, and he knew they were talking about him.

The agent handed him a pound note, crumpled and dirty, which the Islandman folded and placed in a small leather purse.

"Ye gave too much for them lobsters, too bloody much," he heard one of the fishermen say as he went out.

"I'd like to know where he gets them," another said.

"Don't we all know," a third said in a loud voice.

The young man stopped, and turned and faced the men in the shed. For a moment he stared them hard, his eyes bright and burning like small red coals, he was thinking out the words he wanted to say. "I catch them honest," he cried. "No one can say I don't. No one! No one!" A lock of hair had fallen curl-wise over his forehead, and he tossed it back with a defiant jerk of his head. "There's plenty, plenty of them, and fish too," he said remembering the shoal of mackerel passing round the head when the village slept under the morning sun. "Plenty, be God!" he cried. The men were grinning at him so he turned around and went out.

* * *

The sun was just a bright red ball with a blunted side, resting on the distant sea, when the Islandman pulled his curragh out to the row of corks, resting peacefully on a flaccid sea, a sea

stained with gold and purple stripes. Leisurely, as though it were a pleasant easy task, the young man drew in each pot, examined it carefully, and then baited it liberally.

In the same leisurely way, with long slow strokes, he pulled his curragh to the shore, dragging it lightly over the shingle, deftly up-ending it, and then placing large stones against the gunwale to hold it in place for the night.

He was thinking all the time, thinking in a slow unhappy kind of way. He sat down beside the curragh his eyes narrowed slightly as he fixed them on the dimly dark outline of the island, a ragged and discordant rent in the unbroken skyline like a great tear. Gradually the broad expanse seemed to narrow, the sea between the shore and the rocky island faded to thin line like a road between.

A feeling of loneliness surged about him and then swept over him like a great encompassing wave. A choking lump tightened in his throat and his mouth felt dry. He swallowed hard, and then buried his face in his hands. His island home never seemed so near and yet, yet a sea swept between them.

For an instant he thought of the upturned curragh beside him, and how easy it would be—O so easy—to draw it out to sea and row swiftly steadily homewards to warmth and friendliness and . . . He set his face hard against the temptation, after all a few months lobster catching even from an inhospitable shore was all he had. A few months to earn enough to sustain him through a winter, to roof the half built stone cottage on a rock strewn acre from which a few unwilling potatoes grew, and where there was only sparse feeding for his goat. A few pounds to complete and furnish the cottage, and then pay the priest for making Maireadh his wife.

Maireadh! Maireadh of the curling jet black hair, of the creamy complexion, and the fresh young breasts rising firm and enticing from her body like ripe apples. His thoughts dwelt pleasurably on Maireadh, on the rough stone cottage in the shielding of Ballyvoggy Head. His thoughts were satisfying like a pleasant dream, and he was happy. Then grating footsteps on the shingle disturbed him, and he turned his head sharply, startled like one awakening suddenly.

There was a woman standing close by him. A tall thin wizened creature with torn unlaced boots, a torn shawl about her

head and clutched tightly against her scrawny breasts. Her black skirt was badly torn and frayed all round the end. She leaned heavily on a hobbly stick, bent and gnarled like herself.

"God and Mary bless ye," she croaked a greeting in Gaelic.

The young Islandman was frowning but his face softened, and he stared the strange creature wide-eyed. Nobody on the mainland had ever addressed him in the tongue of his island home. He returned the old hag's greeting.

"You're a stranger here, *avico*," she said, eyeing him closely. He nodded.

"You sleep on the hill beyant?" she jerked her stick towards the mountain.

"Yes."

"Your home is there, there on the island beyant, eh?"

"Yes, over there," he told her, pointing to the blurred mass fading into the darkening sky.

"Innishcloghan, *avico*, Innishcloghan," she cried in a high squeaky voice, and she nodded her head. "Sure I know it, know it well *avico*."

He jumped quickly to his feet and stood close to the withered old woman, lank and lean like a hungry scarecrow. "Dhia!" he cried like one reunited to an old friend.

"Aye, I know it, *avico*," the old woman croaked, "but 'tis many the year since I set foot there, many and many the year long before you were borned *avico*. I've travelled a bit since then, many a lane, many a road, aye and many a land, but sure 'tis on'y a cross, cantankerous woman I am, an old bothered woman of the roads with ne'er a roof over me head, an' ne'er the chick or child to offer one; but . . ."

"You can have my cabin for the night," he interrupted quickly, adding apologetically. "It's not much, woman, but 'tis warm an' dry."

She laughed loudly, harshly, her whole frame shaking, her hobbly stick dancing on the stones. The Islandman stared her, a puzzled expression clouding his face.

She stopped laughing and touched him with a cold hand. "You've the generous warm heart of an islandman, *avico*, a kind good heart; but . . ." she wagged her head from side to side and laughed again, not so loud though.

"What are ye laughin' at?" he asked.

"Yerrah 'tis the innocent ye are," she said, her voice harsh, "the innocent without eyes to see, without ears to hear. What d'ye think they'd be sayin' across the bay there? Aye, what would they be sayin'?"

He was amazed at the harshness of her voice, a harshness with venom pouring from a toothless mouth and thin indrawn lips.

"Aye, I know what they'd be sayin'. Aye, I know for I've ears that hear and eyes that see. Liz, mad Liz, sleepin' in the stealer's shack, the stealer from the island who takes our lobsters from our pots, and . . ."

"A stealer! A stealer!" the young man cried, his face ugly with anger. He turned his head and looked across the bay to the village growing dark and hazy in the fading light, then he turned on the old hag gripping her roughly by the shoulders.

She shook herself free. "Don't heed them, *avico*, don't heed them for they're a hard bitter people," she said in a voice that was acid with hate. She shook her head from side to side. "They talk to me, me" she said, "for they don't mind me. Hi. Hi. I'm just Liz, a harmless bothered old woman of the road. Duine le Dia, moryah! A woman of God. But 'tis me that knows them, knows what they say, an' what they think, knows the schemes they plan deep down in their hard hearts. Ye're not the first man they broke son. There are them that went before ye, *avico*. Aye, them that went before ye," she said, in a quiet faraway voice like one recalling a memory dimmed with the forgetfulness of years. Then the venom poured from her thin drawn lips again and she pointed a scrawny finger to the cottages. "'Tis the badness in them, the badness in their hearts, and, *avico*, they'll come in the night, an' you high in the mountain there, an' cut the pots from the line, an' lay them adrift."

"Why should they, woman?" the young man cried, his face close to her's. "Why should they? what have I done? What?" he cried, his dark eyes ablaze deep in his head.

He looked hard at the ugly lined-seamed face of the old woman whose eyes were screwed up into tight little knots. She's mad, mad, he told himself.

"A stealer, a thief from the island that is what they say," she told him, pouring the words out close to his ear. "Ye take the lobsters from their pots, the mackerel from their nets, the herrin's and plaice from their lines, the . . ."

The Islandman drew back and laughed loudly, a harsh forced laugh. For an instant the absurdity of it struck him as funny, but then very slowly he began to understand. She was not mad, she spoke the truth, didn't they always look at him with strange sidelong glances, didn't they whisper and mumble to one another, didn't they interfere with him, come between him and the agent and make fun of his catch. He turned on her, his mind bitter. "It's a lie! A lie!" he cried. "When did I ever have herrin's, mackerel, plaice? When? When?"

"Easy, *avico*. Easy," she said, a strange gentleness creeping into her croaking voice.

"I've only lobsters, lobsters," the young man told her. "I have them because . . . because . . ."

He sighed deeply and turned away.

It had grown dark. The sun had slipped far down beyond the rim of the sea, leaving a faint halo of crimson and purple like the last red embers of a great fire. On the earth's edge the sea was still alight burning softly, and high overhead small dark clouds chased one another unguided by a single star. On the sky-merged island a long beam of light moved round in a great circle tearing a long bright gash across the calm water.

The Islandman turned his head. "Good-night, woman," he said. "God and Mary be with you on your way."

"God and Mary and Patrick bless ye," she said, and he heard her stick grate on the stones as she walked into the night.

* * *

The sun was lying low in the east, pale and watery, and across the bay the white cottages were huddled coldly in a grey mist.

The Islandman picked his steps slowly and carefully down the mountain. The water from the wet bracken seeped into his pampooties, and he made a loud squelching noise as the weight of his body came down on each foot; the thick upturned ends of his trousers were wet and heavy.

He stood for a while by his curragh one hand resting on the bottom. He looked out over the grey sea, undecided. The tide was flowing strongly, a turbulent undercurrent agitating it somewhat. A cold shiver passed through his body as the damp air gathered thickly in minute blobs on his jersey.

He brushed a recalcitrant lock of hair back from his forehead, and then dragged the curragh roughly into the water, pushing himself out with an oar. The water was fairly calm in the shielding of the pier, but beyond that the sea was rough, and beat noisily against the wall of stone.

The Islandman bent his back and pulled strongly to the line of corks bobbing frantically ahead of him, straining hard from their mooring. The curragh danced and reared violently so that he had to dip and hold his oars tightly to steady the frail craft. With a knowledge born of experience he pulled the line in on the tip of his oar carrying it across his bow.

His face grimly set, his lips drawn tightly together, he gathered the line in his hand and drew in each pot. He did not empty them for he was thinking of Mad Liz and the fishermen in the row of cottages by the beach. There were lobsters aplenty in the pots, large greedy fellows locked together, but the Islandman tried not to see them. Instead he piled the pots in a neat heap in his curragh, drew in the line and cut the anchoring stones away.

The young man was tired, and he rested for a while, his oars dug deeply into the water, and gripped against his side. Across from him the row of cottages were blurred in the mist, and away out far where the sun peered bleakly from a bank of watery clouds the island was shrouded in a thick curtain of dull grey, cold and forlorn it was like a death visited house.

On the shore in the shelter of the pier Mad Liz clutched her shawl tightly to her shrivelled breast. She peered through rheumy eyes at the bent figure of the young man lying idly on his oars. She saw the curragh drift shore-wise, rising on the crest of one wave, and then disappearing in its slough, but all the time coming nearer and nearer to the shore with the incoming tide.

Then, quite suddenly, life seemed to jump into the bent body. With a quick strong pull on one oar he turned the curragh round. And as the heavy clouds gathered overhead, and the swell rose along the beach she saw him pull swiftly away.

She clawed the shawl tightly against her breast, and opened her mouth to cry out. The rain started, pouring down heavily. The woman turned towards the Islandman's track up the mountain. Half way up she stopped and looked. The curragh seemed far away, a lone frail thing like a bobbing cork. "God be with ye, young man," she said half aloud, then shaking her clenched fist towards the village she muttered a low curse through her tight bloodless lips.

ON THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION AND THE GENESIS OF POETRY

By J. Lyle Donaghy

IF the fundamental nature of poetry may be expressed in a word, it is in the following,—that the function of poetry is seeing things as they *are*. If this is all that poetry is, what, then, is the need of, or what the rarity in poetic vision? The rarity and the need of it are evident from the following three considerations. (1) The ordinary man, passing by a field of wheat, if he notices it at all, does so as a poet of undeveloped, limited or inhibited capacity, or as a poet whose vision of the reality is distorted by influence of the last specialist, farmer or politician, whose views he may have heard or read; nor has the ordinary man corrective technical skill, in the degree that the poet has, to order his corrupted vision in the light of reality; it is the poet, especially the poet “born,” who, characteristically, sees the object in its extended and particular essence or reality; it is the poet who, foremostly, has the power of just expression of the total reality (which includes the beholder beholding), and all the other modes of view, or specific seeings, *may, in certain perspectives*, become object or part-object of his vision of reality and of the thing *as it is*. In certain perspectives of reality, for example, he may have as his object of vision a chemical reaction in a test-tube; he may see that chemical reaction in its reality as it is, while the chemist sees it in terms of chemical formulae, or he may see it in a perspective in which the activity in the test-tube is part of the reality of the chemist, and he of society, and society of nature. Sanity, balance, truth, are, in very fact, foundation of the poetic nature, and without them poetry is impossible. It is no exaggeration, but the verity, to say, that only the (sane) poet is sane, and that all other human beings run amok, narrowly, after a partial object—and that is what they call “being practical”; its results, in industry and society, have in almost all ages been sufficiently remarkable! The truth of this distinction between poetic seeing and specific modes of seeing is most sheerly beheld when we ask what it is that a “sportsman” sees when a hare crosses his path or a trout rises; he sees “a good shot” or a possible “bite,” but the startling

part of the fact is that, in that moment when the hare appears or the trout rises, he is almost impotent to see hare or trout in any other way, and that walking, without a gun, should a hare or some "game" bird break cover, his arms, on the instant, will rise automatically, in position to fire—and what an impoverished seeing is here implied! (2) Again, the poet sees necessarily from a central point of view which is his own point of view. His vision is therefore inevitably personal, as all true vision must be, and it is only as his own true personality is thus, justly and in balance, expressed in the work, that the work becomes that rich creation which we call a "work of art," and in which we perceive the reality clearly or outstandingly, because along the rich path of seeing of the poet. The object is presented in the immediate order and in the true perspective of its seeing, as a reality, and, hence, a living sympathetic quality in the work of art, as such, compels our truer vision or understanding of the object. It is obvious, therefore, that sincerity in the activity of seeing, and sincerity in the expression of personality, are conditions of true seeing and true expression. And this power of sincerity is very far indeed from being a common possession; most people have so little power to be themselves really, that they can scarcely be said to have selves; the power of sincerity is especially a power of the true poet, and by no means always found perfect even in poets; it is more or less an innate power and is a cultivable one. When the expression of the extended and particular essence or reality of the object includes expression of the activity itself of the poet seeing it, that is, *is, purely*, personal, the expression of the total reality of the seeing or vision is true and complete, and only so can the perception of the particular reality be true, or truly expressed. (3) Finally, it is an *evolving* reality with which the poet is inevitably concerned. Because he sees things as they *are*, he must see them in the "*now*," and so his seeing and expression are of things *last-become*, and therefore new and fresh, and, if truly seen, newly and freshly seen. His vision is of things in the van of evolution, of objects as they *are*, sparkling, living, adventurous, beautiful, strange, exciting, in the van of 'the curved waves' evolving and in the borders of light.' He sees the objects and therefore expresses them creatively as in the light of evolution, bright in the "*now*." About objects so existing, so perceived, is, inevitably, the quality of things first

seen, and therefore, for the see-er, the quality of discovery, in his activity. It is the story of life, the story of beautiful hazard ; and the vision of this is especially *poetic vision*, nor is that truly poetic vision, which is not of it in its completeness, even though it be the bones of Pterodactyl which the poet surveys. Hence, again, the life and vigour of poetry, and its ever-renewed conquest over inanition, over death and pedantry and all which may be imaged as such. (Not that poets or poetry may not be naturally learned ; the finer, the more splendid the materials, the richer,—the more worthy are they of the creative workmanship of the poet. The simplicity of poetry consists, especially, in the simplifications consequent upon its essential order. Truly perceiving, the poet renders more perceptible and truly comprehending, renders more comprehensible). From this concern of poetry with the evolving reality and the constant surprise of birth, derives, in great part, the fresh emotional quality of true poetic vision. But I have said enough to leave evident, not only the rarity, but the value, and necessity to life, of poetic vision, there being no other ultimately true, or constantly delightful.

For the threefold reason of its unique reality, its sincerity, and its fresh emotional sympathetic quality, I have steadily—in spite of some disinclination to use the word because of its charlatan associations—maintained my usage of the word “ vision ” to describe distinctively poetic seeing and understanding. The charlatan will perish, the poet will remain. In the nature of poetic vision itself is to be found the primary source and cause of poetic inspiration. From its truth and *livingness* derives, and with it waxes or wanes, the excited impulse of art. In the delighted perception—the fresh impact of the evolving reality upon the being of the poet—is the happy origination and energisation of poetry. That is the fundamental and general explanation of poetic inspiration, whether the vision be the sudden first or the sudden last, wholeness of seeing.

Sometimes the impulse to creative poetic activity derives immediately from the first seeing of the object, as, for examples, from the first delighted seeing of a landscape, or of a particular human body. Sometimes the impulse derives from a delighted perception which is manifestly *eventual* and *the result of a growing intimacy with the object through many seeings*, as, often, when

Wordsworth writes of the mountain nature that he knew, or Burns of the human nature that he knew, yet in such cases the vision will still have some of the quality of a sudden first seeing. It will, in each case (as in the case where the vision is actually a sudden first seeing), be the sudden first *wholeness of seeing* of that particular object, or natural body of truth or beauty, in its natural wholeness or bodyness; in other words, the sudden first *wholeness of seeing* of the extended and particular reality of that object (including the poet seeing it). In all these cases, so far, the source of the poetic inspiration is manifestly in the poetic vision itself, *in its truth and livingness*, in the delightfulness of the perception of the evolving reality. Let us now suppose the ultimate object of poetic vision, one of the most complex possible. Let us suppose that it is no less than "The Nature of Change." If the poet's interest has been early aroused in regard to that subject; if his observations have often been of relevant phenomena, and his attention zealously directed to those phenomena; if his thought, his meditation,—has often been close and sincere, concerning them, and if his natural interest in the subject is strong enough to prompt him to envisage the subject as a whole, to make him desirous of achieving a solution of it, then, he may, *at once, in response to that natural volition, out of the sum of his meditated experience, and facilitated by his natural poetic power, or usage, of ordering in a true perspective, perceive that vital reality of form, the solution of which he is in quest, and, simultaneously, emotionally excited by the beauty and freshness of the order and truth perceived, and the joy of the triumph of function, creatively cast in rhythmic form of words, which represent plastically, not only his seeing and the vital order of perception of the vision, but his delighted or elevated or exalted emotion of seeing, and the result will be what by universal consent is called a poem; Or, he may study, collect, collate, again study and sincerely search for the solution, and, so prepared, and when he has allowed time for these materials to accommodate naturally in his mind, and given his mind time to recover from its state of strained resilience and renew its energy, on returning to the problem, swiftly effect the final ordering of the materials and discover the true solution, the vital reality of form which he is in quest of, and, simultaneously, excited by the beauty and freshness of the order and truth perceived, the splendour of the evolving reality perceived, similarly give it creative*

expression as a poem. Thus, the only place where we may look for a cause or source of poetic inspiration, accessory to the poetic vision itself, is in the natural volition of the poet, and this from the very outset.

Two other points may be mentioned in regard to the creative activity of the poet. They are of a less general character than those already made. (1) The first of these relates to a certain kind of flux which sometimes characterises the actual process of creation. If we would unravel a bundle of tangled and knotted twine, we must keep the whole bundle loose as we work and not prematurely draw tightly single cords and ends of cords, or the whole will become much more difficult to disentangle. There is an analogy between this unravelling of a bundle of twine and the unravelling of an intellectual problem; if we "fix" upon certain partial theories and, at first sight, plausible solutions, prematurely, or hold to them too doggedly, we make it more difficult for ourselves to discover the true solution—the solution which fits *all* the facts. A certain kind of freedom in the treatment of the materials, right up to the point of discovery of the true solution, renders that discovery both easier and more likely to be made. While such a freedom in the treatment of the materials is preserved, there *may* be about them, and about the poet's activity, some *appearance* as of "nebulosity," which might less truly be referred to as "chaos" in a neutral sense of that word, *i.e.*, neither good nor bad chaos. Again, the plastic artist, as, for example, a sculptor working in clay, or a moulder of metals, keeps his plastic materials workable, malleable, until he has achieved the desired form. Very similarly the poet preserves a degree of workability in his plastic materials, until he has achieved the completely true expression. It is a pliancy or plasticity of the medium of expression which might be described as "fluidity," or "moltenness." By maintaining that state of the medium, he is better able, especially, to achieve final *balance* and, therefore, final truth of expression. There is thus, or may be, about the creative activity, both as regards the visioning and the expressing of the vision, a certain kind of "fluidity" or "flux"—the more necessary is a kind of tautness or athletic quality, an intent alertness, in the governing mind of the poet. The whole process has, throughout, an essentially active and positive aspect. Moreover, genuine poetic products, in their final state, have

about them the seal or hall-mark of their creation. It is evident in their organic *fashioning*, in sure rhythm, and a firm authentic quality of style. If we suppose a difference between mere mixture and real blend, between mechanical construction and organic fashioning, we get near to a description of this quality of the true poetic work, or making, poetry being characterised by perfect union throughout. The marriages of thought and word, of word and word, in poetry are of the nature of *coalescence*. Poetry does not tolerate mere mechanical combinations, either on the scale of the phrase, or the scale of the period and poem. This quality of coalescence is especially characteristic of the work of the poet born. (It sometimes, unfortunately characterises, in part, even his erroneous work. In such cases the expression has a limited perfection as representing faithfully the error or delusion). (2) The second point relates to the *appearance* of the mood of the poet while he is engaged in the work of creation; naturally, that mood is characterised by some stillness of attitude, the result of concentration, and is intense and intent; such a mood may easily enough appear to others, and sometimes even to himself as a "brooding" state. But truly the poetic mood, however meditative and absorbed, is intrinsically an alert, live and bright mood, and is often extrinsically so also. Of old, those who saw the poet employed intently creating, spoke of him as "rapt" and "fiery," and this was a better description of him than any description of him as "darkly brooding." The poet himself referred frequently to his psychological state, during the active period of poetic creation, as a "luminous" one, which it is.

TOLSTOY and A RUSSIAN GENERAL

By Denis Ireland

LAST night I finished the fifteen hundred and thirty-sixth page of *War and Peace*. To-day, on looking up "Tolstoy" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, I found that his colossal battle-picture was begun in 1864 and finished in 1866*. I rubbed my eyes and looked at the dates again. In the middle of that tremendous act of creation the shot was fired in the theatre at

* All, that is except the final section, which was added in 1869.

Washington that ended the career of Lincoln. For a moment Napoleon, the retreat from Moscow, the tragic deathmask of Lincoln, were all mixed up together in my mind. Then I remembered that Tolstoy, in describing the war of 1812 in Russia, was describing events that happened sixteen years before he was born.

Nevertheless, that momentary lifting of the curtain of Time started a whole searchlight-battery of reflections on *War and Peace*. No use in me pretending to write a literary appreciation ; as well try to convey in words what it feels like to stand in the shadow of Slieve League and look upwards. My aesthetic friends tell me it sprawls ; which is only another way of saying that a mountain is not the same thing as a cameo. I tell them to run away and soak their aesthetic little souls in *Madame Bovary* ; that this is a book for men. As E. M. Forster has remarked, there is room to stack whole libraries of so-called classical novels "in the colonnades of *War and Peace*."

There is first the flesh-and-blood effect of the hundreds of characters who throng its pages. Take a minor (and, incidentally, unsympathetic) character like Anatole Kuragin. First you see him preening himself and ogling the ladies at the Opera ; then you see him a mangled, blood-stained body on an operating-table after the battle of Borodino. It is Tchekov's technique of rendering a moonlit night by painting the high-light and the shadow : 'the reflection from the neck of a broken bottle contrasted with the darkness of a dark wood. It is all that is necessary ; the mind fills in the intervals for itself. You know, despise, understand, pity Anatole Kuragin for ever.

* * *

As a picture gallery *War and Peace* beats the history books hollow ; as a topical handbook it sells its tens of thousands—has even sold itself clean out of our Irish bookshops ! Behind its pictures of Moscow burning, of the French army staggering in retreat along the frozen roads, there are discernible three themes, two major and one minor—the life of the soldier, the fallacy of the Great Man, and the nature of History. Tolstoy not only understood soldiers, he had been a soldier himself. He understood that element in the life of the soldier that confounds the earnest-

minded, and especially the feminine, critics of war and its stupidities. He knew that war is not all fighting, that in the intervals between battles men at war often lead the kind of life about which men in shops and counting-houses and (publish it not in *Home Notes* or *Eve's Journal*) happy marriage beds sometimes secretly dream—a gipsy, nomadic life without, if not altogether women, at any rate the responsibilities of women. One hope for the world to-day is that that something, which Tolstoy so perfectly understood, has begun to fade from the life of the soldier with the mechanisation of war. Impossible to feel like a gipsy in the reek of petrol, a clatter of tank tracks, and the eternal dust clouds of lorry convoys. With the arrival of the dive-bomber the intervals of battle have grown less attractive.

To understand Tolstoy on the soldier's life, you must remember that he once served in what would seem to us to-day a nice leisurely war in the Crimea. The life of the soldier is, however, only a minor theme in *War and Peace*. When it comes to the major themes, the fallacy of the Great Man and the mechanics of history, the main point to remember is that, in spite of his own cherished belief that his family was, at least in part, originally German, Tolstoy was all Russian and therefore partly Oriental; that on his visits to the West he was so sickened by our plutocratic materialism and the sterility of our philosophy that he shook off the dust of Western Europe and fled back to Russia. For the profound and subtle Oriental mind our Western conceptions of genius and greatness are simply comic. The Truth is there, whether you choose to look at it or not, just as the electric current is in the wire, and to claim "genius" for displaying some fraction of it is, to the Oriental mind, equivalent to making a song and dance because you have just switched on the light. For the Oriental mind the emphasis is on the light, for the Western mind on the switch. The man of power, as exemplified by Napoleon, was therefore fair game for Tolstoy, and by the time he has finished with him there is nothing left but a uniform, a certain low cunning, and the audacity to profit by the turmoil of a revolutionary period. Compare Napoleon's "order of the day" before the battle of Borodino with what actually happened, as described in the pages of *War and Peace*, and you should be cured of the "power complex" for ever.

It may, of course, be objected that Tolstoy's account of

the battle of Borodino is unfair or inaccurately weighted. The answer involves both the mind of Tolstoy and the nature of battles as seen by those who take part in them. Tolstoy's mind had an extraordinary universality and power; several generations have testified to that, none more so than the present; and one of the elements that makes *War and Peace* the enduring masterpiece it is is its serene detachment from nationalist sentiment as it is usually understood. Tolstoy's mind may be Russian in texture, but it is not *contained* by Russia, vast as she is; it moves above the stormy Europe of his day and generation; you seem to be suspended high above a panorama that stretches from the boulevards (or what will shortly be the boulevards) of Paris to the low, dimly-wooded hills behind Moscow. You are made aware of the absurd motives that sent the French and their allies marching into Russia only to come straggling out again, but Tolstoy expends very little heat in the telling of them, just as there is an extraordinary absence of chauvinism in his account of what happened at Borodino. He knows that the French are absurd partly because all men are absurd, just as he knows the difference between a staff officer's or an historian's version of a battle and what actually happens in the smoke and thunder of the real thing. He knows that a battle, once joined, becomes a sort of organism with an independent life of its own, the sum total of a contest between thousands of individual wills; that, once begun, any particular individual's chance of controlling it is remote, no matter how eminent or smothered in gold lace that individual may happen to be. Napoleon's generals were quite convinced they had won the battle of Borodino, and so they had—according to what, no doubt, the text-books then referred to as "the rules of war." The French advanced after the battle, the Russians retreated, *ergo* the French had won.

Only one man saw the truth of Borodino at the moment of its happening—the wily old Russian generalissimo Kutuzov. He saw that by merely sticking their ground as long as they had, the slow-moving, obstinate Russian infantry had inflicted a death wound on the French army. Like a wounded boar it might still make dangerous rushes, but all the hunters had to do was to keep it in sight and wait for the end. Secure in that knowledge, Kutuzov was prepared to fall back to Moscow and beyond. No one believed him; in fact, all the best military minds,

and even the Emperor Alexander himself, called him a doddering old fool at the best and a coward at the worst. But Kutuzov was so old and so wise with that deep peasant wisdom that is deeper than wisdom that he was beyond caring what any one thought of him. Kutuzov cared only for the result, and his watchwords were Time and Patience. When bright young generals and staff officers argued with him, he promptly went to sleep and snored in their faces. And while he slept and drank and moved about his army slumped on his horse, the rank and file believed in him. The peasants and workmen who composed the army saw further than the generals and the young men in gold lace. They sensed that the old fox was up to something and were prepared to trust him. Just how brilliantly their trust was rewarded is a matter of history—and Tchaikowsky's 1812 Overture.

* * *

The vividness of the landscapes in *War and Peace*, the flesh-and-blood effect of the actors crowding the huge canvas, seem to defy chronology; they have the timelessness of genius in the deeper, Oriental sense of the parting of a curtain. The effect on the reader is a puzzling sensation that, whether he was officially born in 1828 or not, Tolstoy managed in some miraculous fashion to be there, to watch Moscow burning with his own eyes, to march with the French army in retreat and at the same time to ride with the Cossacks and the partisans who lurked in the woods on either flank of it all the way to the frontier.

Lincoln, as we have seen, was shot in the theatre at Washington at a moment when Tolstoy was, presumably, half-way through what must have been the colossal manuscript of *War and Peace*, and the mere juxtaposition of names starts a pregnant train of thought. Suppose Tolstoy had left us as detailed a study of the man from Springfield as his picture of the upstart from Corsica. What would have been his reactions? The question is worth asking because it throws a flood of light on the subject of greatness. Not all the "great men" of the West were careerists and power fanatics. As an American thinker has remarked, "What lives in Lincoln is the miracle of his achievement of

spiritual values from the crude life about him." Tolstoy on Lincoln would have been one great moral philosopher on another. But maybe it took time to reveal the full stature of the giant figure by the Potomac. Only when the sun of the nineteenth century was already setting did men begin to realise the length of the deepening shadow. And perhaps no one realises it more poignantly than those who look into the heart of Democracy in the world conflict of to-day.

The satire of *War and Peace* is directed, then, against the little "great men" of this world, against the fallacies of personal ambition. Here Tolstoy's ideas spring logically from his philosophy of history; in fact, the two sets of ideas are inextricably intertwined. Given Tolstoy's subtle, semi-oriental conception of what really constitutes greatness, the sequel follows almost automatically. Napoleon emerges from the pages of *War and Peace* a mountebank, and the real hero is Kutuzov, the lazy, at times dissolute, but always humble-hearted old man who is the very reverse of a "hero" in the Western sense of the word. Napoleon strove to impose his will on history; Kutuzov strove only to empty himself so that history might act *through* him. Kutuzov simply looked at the facts of the situation; like a man on the banks of a log-jammed river, he loosened a log here and there, then stood back and let the current do the rest. It is not the usual Western idea of a "great man." But then, as Tolstoy remarks, "Flunkeys never admit the possibility of great men because great men never tally with a flunkey's idea of greatness."

No wonder Kutuzov puzzled the bright young men who hang about the back areas of war, full of theories; no wonder his name was anathema in the salons of Moscow and St. Petersburg. A man who could declare, not only afterwards but in the moment of retreat from the field, that Borodino was a Russian victory was obviously the kind of man who was bound to collide head-on with the scribes and pharisees. It is true, of course, that with the retreat of the miserable remnant of the Grande Armée beyond the Berezina, Kutuzov was finally and brilliantly justified; that in the jargon of the West he "was a success." It would, however, never have occurred to the old man that *he* was a success; if he had been articulate enough to express such niceties, he would probably have held that history had worked through

him as the tide flows through an empty channel; as well hold that history was a success. And with that he would probably have had another swig out of the bottle.

The character of Kutuzov is lovingly painted in *War and Peace*, and no wonder, because he is central, not only to Russia, but to Tolstoy's philosophy of history. In the two sets of ideas illustrated by, and embodied in, the ungainly, half-blind figure of the old Russian generalissimo—the necessity for the immolation of the personal will, and the necessary triumph of the facts of an historical situation over men's impassioned but mistaken ideas about the same situation—with these two inter-related ideas Tolstoy signed the death warrant of the coloured-picture-of-kings-and-queens school of historical writing.

Did he foresee where that would lead? Did he foresee, for example, Karl Marx spinning *Das Kapital* out of the dust of the British Museum reading-room, like a combative old spider in exile? Did he foresee that one day amongst the "sausage eaters" (as the Germans are sometimes labelled in the pages of *War and Peace*) there would arise a pedantic little schoolmaster called Oswald Spengler, who, buried in his provincial obscurity, would produce a fat volume called *The Decline of the West*, and thereby alter men's ideas about the springs of history? To move even further forward from the fictitious light of history into the apparent darkness of the present, did Tolstoy, as one of the sowers in Russia's seed-time, foresee the mechanical harvest, the dangers of Machine-worship, and the chill in the heart of Europe at the coming of Leviathan?

The answer is that whether he did or not, is beside the point. All that concerns the artist is truth. What men make of truth is another matter. And no one doubts the profound philosophic and artistic truth of *War and Peace*. It is gigantic, therefore it sprawls. But it is at the same time a masterpiece. And because it is a masterpiece, it has become, in the noble words in which a Belgian poet once described all masterpieces, "a portion of the conscience of mankind."

THE VERSE PLAYS OF AUSTIN CLARKE

By Vivian H. S. Mercier

WHEN Yeats died in 1939, it must have seemed, to many, as if the Irish verse drama had died with him. He had practically invented it, had supplied the bulk of it, and his prestige as a director had ensured a hearing for it at the Abbey Theatre so long as he remained alive. (The Abbey, we know, began with prose farces as curtain-raisers for poetic plays: the last time I saw a verse play on the regular bill there was when Yeats' *Purgatory* acted as curtain-raiser for Synge's *Playboy*, which was performed as a knockabout farce.) It was easy for people to forget that Austin Clarke had by then written three verse plays; the easier, as none of them had been performed by the Abbey, and one of them had never been played at all. These three plays—*The Son of Learning*, in three acts, *The Flame* and *Sister Eucharist*, each in one act—had received their first publication in this magazine, in 1926, 1929 and 1938 respectively. Since Yeats' death, however, Clarke has written, and had performed, four more one-act verse plays, in which he has not only kept alive the tradition of verse drama in Ireland, but has enlarged it. For the fight he has made almost single-handed to do the first, and the power and originality he has displayed in doing the second, little credit has so far come his way. The Abbey, however, has made him a small amends—it went so far as to put on his play *Black Fast* at two special performances.

The most immediately obvious way in which Clarke has enlarged the scope of verse drama—as Yeats understood the term—is by introducing humour into it. Any humour in Yeats' plays is confined strictly to prose; verse is for more serious things. Clarke, on the other hand, is not afraid to call *Black Fast* "A Poetic Farce," and the same sub-title might be given to *The Son of Learning*. *The Kiss* is too subtle for such a gross word as "farce" to be applied to it, but it is deliciously amusing. The more serious plays, too, have their humorous side in a sense, for Clarke's formula is to follow every climax with an anti-climax.

Then too, Clarke has found new subject-matter. Yeats' plays are pagan even when they deal with Christian times : Clarke prefers to emphasize the Christian elements in such of his fables as are borrowed from history, while at the same time giving them a twist of his own. Besides, his plays of the religious life deal with a subject-matter which Yeats could never, as a Protestant, either know or understand. Yeats' Catholic Church consists almost entirely of saints ; Clarke knows that, laity apart entirely, the Church is made up less of saints than of everyday, run-of-the-mill clergy, monks and nuns in their various degrees. And, whereas the saint can afford to be an individualist, the rank-and-file of the Church Militant have to stick pretty close to army regulations. Discipline, the rule of the order, is particularly stressed in his two plays about nuns, *The Flame* and *Sister Eucharist*.

A point which has been stressed almost too much by, for instance, Padraic Colum, is Clarke's mediaevalism. Colum is to be excused, however, since Clarke has stressed it himself. People tend to forget that the conventual aspect of mediaeval life is still alive to-day in Ireland ; everywhere there is a convent or a monastery, in the next street or on the next hill-top. *Sister Eucharist* is set in the present, *The Flame* in the Middle Ages, but, as far as their spirit is concerned, the dates might be interchanged without taxing the credulity of the audience.

There is, indeed, one quality of mediaeval life which Clarke, captures particularly well, it seems to me. I am no mediaevalist, but my desultory studies have convinced me of one thing : the "other six deadly sins," as Miss Dorothy Sayers recently called them, were considered much more redoubtable then than they are now. Lust, to us, is the one great sin, but in the Middle Ages the other six were equally terrible—and equally tempting. Clarke has grasped this, as far as Gluttony, at least, is concerned. *The Son of Learning*, in which the King is possessed by a demon of gluttony, contains more descriptions of food than anything else written since the death of Dickens. Gluttony beats Lust hands down, for the King is too busy eating to turn up in time for his own wedding, and it is only when the demon has left him

that he can spare any attention for Ligach, his slighted bride-to-be. Even such a simple delicacy as milk inspires King and Scholar to an antiphon of praise :

 All the white brewing of the cow.
Her. new milk ?
 Skim milk ?
 Old Milk ?
 Buttermilk.
And fat milk ?
 Lean milk.
 Yellow bubbling milk ?
Her curd milk.
 Whey milk ?
 Cream milk.
 Double milk ?
Aye, calving milk that blobs and blubbers down
The gullet . . .

Food even finds its way into the King's prayers ; when he realises his blasphemy, he tries to say " an act of nutrition," with equally unfortunate results.

Another way in which Clarke shows his grasp of the mediaeval mind can be seen in *Black Fast*. In these days, when religion is fighting for its very existence, few believers dare to jest about sacred subjects, in public at any rate. In the Middle Ages it was different : that can be seen from the work of Chaucer, to name but one. The miracle and morality plays, too, often contained a good deal of comic relief, and miracles were sometimes performed in them merely to make the Devil look ridiculous. Something of the kind occurs in *Black Fast*, which concerns the quarrel between a King of Ulster and his wife about the date of Easter and the observance of Lent. The King, reckoning Easter in the Irish way, has faithfully observed Lent already, and is now feasting as he usually does during the rest of the year. His wife, under the influence of some Munster monks, has adopted the new-fangled mode of calculation of the Roman Church, and is thus still in the middle of Lent. This leads to all sorts of culinary complications ; also, the wife is abstaining from conjugal pleasure during Lent, which does not help to promote harmony. Finally, to settle the dispute, a full-dress debate is held between

the Ulster and Munster monks. It ends in confusion when the chief of the Munster monks speaks slightly of Columcille. The Ulster monks go back to their monastery in a rage. At this moment there is a clap of thunder, and all the forbidden victuals laid out for the King's supper disappear off the table in the banquet-hall. The Munster monks claim that this miracle proves their case, but another miracle follows, for the food sails through the air to the nearby monastery, where the Ulster monks make ready to eat it! It seems to me that the mediæval mind would find nothing impossible in such a witty miracle, while at the same time it could not fail to be amused by it.

In the case of the miracle in *Black Fast*, no doubt of its authenticity is hinted at by the author, though naturally the Munster monks see in it the Devil's handiwork; to which King Connal replies very justly:—

Why should the Devil dish up

Late dinner for my venerable Bishop?

In his more serious plays, however Clarke has to tackle a problem which has faced many dramatists in this and other epochs. If one writes a poetic drama on a religious subject—and the Greek and Mediæval tradition of poetic drama makes it difficult, even for an author who, unlike Clarke, is not preoccupied with religious questions, to write on any other subject—what is one to do about miracles? Miracles are just the material for poetic drama, but what happens if a part of the audience—or the author—does not really believe in them? Is one to make use of miracles for the sake of their effect, and perhaps sacrifice one's intellectual integrity, or is one to expose the miracle as a sham and risk spoiling the work of art? Euripides, if Verrall is right in his interpretation of the *Alcestis*, did both; so does Clarke. Whereas the prose dramatists who make use of miracles take great care to assure you that their miracles are not miracles at all—a case in point is Louis D'Alton's *Spanish Soldier (Tanyard Street)*—Clarke does nothing of the kind. He merely hints that there *may* be a rational explanation, but it is open to you to accept it, or to reject it and take the miracle at its face value. Either way, the immediate impact of the miracle, its power to arouse pity and terror, is not sacrificed. The climax comes first, and is only followed later by the hint of anti-climax.

As examples of the method, we may take Clarke's first three

plays. In *The Son of Learning*, the Scholar, having persuaded the King to give him his golden torc, gains by the possession of it authority over both monks and King. He has the monks tie the King in a chair, and proceeds to mortify him by eating a hearty meal in front of him and making pretended love to the King's betrothed. He finally pretends to entice the demon out of the King's mouth with a ladleful of honey ; the demon responds to his coaxings in a "ventriloquent" voice, and the Scholar, overturning the last candle, disappears in a clap of thunder and a burst of harp music, taking the King's torc with him. When the lights go up again, the King is cured, and, say the monks, the demon has carried off the Scholar. But the thunder clap was part of a thunder shower, which drenched some soldiers before they could take shelter in the monastery, and they say they saw no demon. Also, a beggar is of the opinion that the ventriloquent voice was the Scholar's own. We have already been shown that the Scholar is somewhat of a juggler, so perhaps the beggar is right. On the other hand, the monks may be right. It does not greatly matter, in any case, as the Scholar's high jinks are the *raison d'être* of the play. For once, the poet and scholar lords it over Church and State, as all good poets and scholars think they should, but as they rarely do in real life.

In *The Flame* an old nun and a novice are tending the flame of St. Brigid. The novice's sense of guilt because she has allowed her hair to grow is preventing her from praying. The nun finally worms her secret out of her. The Abbess and other nuns enter and also discover the novice's secret. She is cross-examined by the Abbess, who draws out the story of her dreams of worldly delights, and of the beautiful young man Absalom,
betrayed

And buckled by the anger of his hair—

The Abbess is about to cut the girl's locks when the flame begins to dim ; the nuns pray feverishly against evil spirits, but, as the novice is saying a prayer to St. Brigid, asking to be hidden in her blue mantle, the flame turns blue and goes out. When candles are brought, the novice is found to have fainted ; as the nuns become calmer the old nun confesses that, with all the talk, she had forgotten to feed the flame with oil, and that this, and not evil spirits, is the reason why the flame went out. It then transpires that there is still a spark left in the wick, and

as the oil is poured in the flame rises again. The good nuns are convinced that a miracle has been performed.

In *Sister Eucharist*, a young nun is causing trouble in a convent by praying night and day for the souls of the nuns of her order who are in Purgatory, and by refusing to eat any food. The majority of the nuns feel that this is youthful hysteria and very bad for discipline. The Reverend Mother, remembering her own early days in the convent,

when we ourselves
Were young and every book was edged with gold,
How at the stroke of early bell, we sighed
All in a tremble at the chapel door

is inclined to regret them and to sympathise with Sister Eucharist's passion of devotion. In the second scene of the play we are shown Eucharist's vision of the nuns in Purgatory for whom she is praying, who urge her to pray for herself; she refuses, but they persuade her to

Gain absolution for the sins

Of your whole life.

At this moment the priest who has been sent for by Reverend Mother interrupts the vision. (He speaks prose throughout). Sister Eucharist makes a general confession to him, and no sooner has she done so than she collapses. The nuns rush in and find, as they loosen her habit, that her arms are bound round with chains. When she recovers from her fainting fit, Sister Eucharist gets up and disappears into the chapel. The convent bell rings, seemingly of its own accord. The senior nuns who follow Eucharist into the chapel find her lying dead there and Reverend Mother concludes

That God at last has granted to our order
A saint, a saint to stand within His Presence
And plead for us.

As all the nuns go out into the chapel, a little lay sister comes in and tells Sister Angelica, the nun who had most faith in Sister Eucharist's sainthood, that it was she who rang the bell, to which Sister Angelica's only reply is:—

Because you are humble and always willing
God chose you for His holy will to-night.

There is no need to labour the point of the similarity between the method of *The Flame* and that of *Sister Eucharist*. In each

play, be it said, the main body of the nuns act as chorus, as the beggars do in *The Son of Learning*. One brief choral passage, in which the nuns confess the weakness of their faith, actually appears in identical words in both plays; it has the effect of a litany as the nuns reply to the questions of Abbess or Reverend Mother.

Following these two very similar plays, written with a nine-year interval between, we come to a period of experiment in Clarke's dramatic work, encouraged, almost certainly, by the fact that he had by now formed the Dublin Verse Speaking Society. This Society acted *The Flame* as part of their first public performance at the Peacock Theatre in October 1941. *Black Fast* (1941) was not done by them, but Clarke's next experiment, *As The Crow Flies*, "a lyric play for the air," was broadcast by them from Radio Eireann early in 1942. I was unlucky enough to miss this, the play's only performance, but in the reading it seems remarkably well adapted to the new medium, making use, as it does, of storms and echoing caves and the plash of oars. In this play Clarke achieves a variety of effects by the use of other metres besides his customary blank verse, which is reserved for the human protagonists only.

A young monk, Aengus, an old monk, Vergilius, and a busy monk in his prime, Manus, are caught on the Shannon by a storm while returning to Clonmacnoise. They shelter in a cave, and there they hear "the voices of the fallen," as the Eagle of Knock, her eaglets, the Crow of Achill, and other animals, discuss the storm, and wonder when there was ever such a night before. The Crow finally persuades the Eagle to leave her in charge of the eaglets and go in search of the Salmon of Assaroe, who will give it if anyone does. The Salmon turns out to be a reincarnation of the Titan, the legendary man who survived the Deluge, and who admits that he has never seen such a night since the Flood. He also teaches the Eagle, in the words of *The Kiss*, "Sad lessons/ In dualism." He cannot find an answer to the question which has always tormented him: -

How can the forethought of defilement
Be reconciled with any faith
That teaches mortals to be mild? . . .
How must reality be named
If carnal being is so shamed?

When he learns who has sent her to him, he warns her that the Crow has probably killed her eaglets, a favourite trick of hers. In the morning Aengus and Vergilius, who, unlike their companion, have listened to the voices and been unable to sleep, are beginning to believe that it was all a bad dream, when they catch sight of the Eagle dashing her wings against the rock, in agony for the loss of her little ones. Then Aengus realises that his first experience of the power of evil has been a real one and not a vision, and cries to Vergilius

Father, Father, I know

The ancient thought that men endure at night.

What wall or cave can hide us from that knowledge ? . . .

The Kiss, after the French of Théodore de Banville, is a pierrot play for two characters, Pierrot, and Uirgeal, who takes the place of Columbine. In rhyming couplets, it was another new departure for Clarke technically, but its charm is so fragile that one hesitates to fumble it with clumsy fingers of prose. Better to refer readers to the issue of this magazine for July-September, 1942, and leave it at that.

The Plot is Ready, first performed last October and as yet unpublished, sets the coping-stone on Clarke's dramatic achievement so far. In it he returns to the Euripidean tragedy of earlier plays, but with a mastery of stage technique gained by practical experience with his verse-speaking group. Each of the play's four scenes flows naturally into the next ; each presents, briefly and intensely, an aspect of the theme.

This play tells the story of Muriadach Mac Erca, an Irish king of the sixth century, who has driven out his lawful wife, and taken a mistress, Osna. To win him to repentance, monks and common people, under the leadership of Abbot Cairnech, are praying and fasting against him, drawn up in a ring about the royal house. As the play opens, we learn from the monks that Muriadach's grave is being dug, for the Abbot knows he is to die to-night. The next scene brings us inside the house, where Muriadach's soldiers' morale is decidedly shaken by the monks' tactics. Muriadach himself is very ill and Osna, who plans to smuggle him away to Tara, has drugged him with

belladonna to quiet him. As he sleeps, she confesses that she first came to him as a decoy to bring about his death and avenge her family :

But when we pledged that kiss, my people died
Upon my lips—and both of us were lost.

Up to this she has been afraid to confess her deceit to him, but now she cries,

Forgive my fear, forgive it to me now.
Before we leave this house forever, knowing
That all we have believed in must be right,
Though Ireland pray against us both, to-night.

The next scene shows us Muriadach's dream, in which Abbot and monks call upon him to repent, but he refuses and they vanish. A fresh bout of delirium, however, makes him leap out of bed, mistake the monks for an advancing army, and, as he rushes down upon them, fall into his own grave and be killed. His queen and the Abbot are beside him at the last, and say he died repentant. But his ghost comes to the house

so glorious

The heart is shaken with tears.

It calls to Osna, who goes out to meet it into a blaze of light and disappears. The monks and the queen do not know what to make of this, but the Abbot has his answer ready :—

The terrible assumption of that woman,
Drawn soul and body from our midst—unspaced
In a second—is a warning to the faithless.
I speak of things not known in nature.

More than

Five thousand years ago, measured by sun
And moon and working star, archangels, angels,
Revolted from their spiritual being,
And theologians say their headlong flight
Continues still through conscious time—

(*slowly*)

and as

They pass—

The brightness of those heavenly bodies
Destroys the unprotected.

Let us pray.

DRAMATIC COMMENTARY

By A. J. Leventhal

SOME time ago the American dramatic critic George Jean Nathan, addressing a group of illustrious members of the English theatre who were entertaining him to dinner, began his reply to the toast in his honour with the words : " The recent tendency in American drama—" , when he was interrupted by Archer and Walkley who called out : " To hell with the recent tendencies in American drama ; we want to hear about the Ziegfeld *Follies*." There comes a time with most dramatic critics, as indeed with most theatre-goers, when the music-hall calls more urgently than the legitimate stage, when serious drama palls and the cry for the cancan is heard in the land. The Edwards-MacLiammoir combination has an annual awareness of this need and its efforts this year with *Masquerade* deserved the popular response evidenced by its long run. Not altogether cancan in its appeal, for the Gate Theatre is far too conscious of its own and its audience's intellectual standards to attempt either to attract by " les girls " or to provide the equally popular relaxation of the custard-pie and back-slapping of farce. There was a nice balance between the funny, the satiric, the serious and community singing. The serious items—*The Cask of Amontillado* and *The Ghost of Abel*—were the least successful. We were out for fun—not for a Poe inspired mystery monologue or a full volumed Blakeian Voice of Jehovah.

Tyrell Pine has a pretty wit as well as a gift for tuneful compositions. His prophecies for the year 1991 were as melodious as the lyrics of Thomas Moore but had none of the *naïveté* of the ancient Moore of Almanack fame. One forecast came true that very night. The writer had not to wait forty seven years before paying for his seat in his capacity as dramatic critic. This curious insistence on the part of the management may be put down to the oracular influence of Mr. Pine's lyric rather than to any desire to eschew criticism or increase box-office receipts.

The most amusing item of the evening was *A la Crêpe Suzette*. Here was the dance, here the song, here the humour, here the superb farce of that occasional comedian Michael MacLiammoir. There are times when this actor fills a part with a new depth and times when he appears utterly unsuited to his rôle, but never

have I seen him in motley—the motley without the Pagliacci prologue tear—without roaring with laughter. He had a drollery as M^{me}. Suzette, an exotic bubble of spontaneity, that was not of this country. His Parisian patter added to the characterisation, for it was indeed the Gallic tongue and no sly music-hall abuse of it. And how he danced! There were no *entrechats*, no *grand écart* ("splits" to the plebs), but his *pas seul* brought his skirts up and the house down.

With a still unslaked thirst for fun and games I thought I should like to renew after a year, my acquaintance with a comedian as established in reputation as Lord Iveagh's brew and in the common view as good for you. I mean, of course, Jimmie O'Dea. He functioned as Maggie Crusoe in the Pantomime at the Gaiety Theatre and I was amazed to discover that he had discarded the apparel of the Coombe and had called in Patrick Perrot to translate the shawl into shantung. Still depressed by memories of the B.B.C. Irish half-hour which rivalled in vulgarity any stage Irishman performance of other years, I soon decided that Jimmie's part in this display could only have been a temporary fall from comic grace, a condescension to an imaginary mob, a sop to the profane. We are, of course, on a different plane from Mr. MacLiammoir's fooleries in *Masquerade*. The jokes are simpler and the allusions local. The latter, however, delivered with the local *blas* sounded even funnier emanating from the wearer of a robe from Rathgar than from the obvious denizen of the district which his popular song rhymes with Macroom.

One must not imagine that fashion was sartorially mocked in the manner of the music-hall artist known as Burlington Bertie whose eyeglass and cane contradicted the tatterdemalion, for Mr. Perrot dressed him as he might have dressed Meriel Moore for a Society play. His grey toupee and spectacles in the final scene were worthy of the headmistress of a kindergarten school. For all I know Mr. O'Dea is a keen student of Henri Bergson and has mastered his essay on laughter, which posits divagation from the norm as the prime factor in stimulating hilarity, at any rate, from such an exterior one could only have expected the clipped puritanical severities of the spinster but instead, to the general merriment, one heard the rich vulgarities, the loose-lipped lingo of Thomas Street. Jimmie is still the funniest comedian in this country and, with George Formby, Lauder *et hoc genus omne*,

has proved that regionalism in the comic has a universal appeal.

Abraham Lincoln, as produced at the Gate Theatre, could not have been the cause for provoking the wits into murmuring : " Dull as Drinkwater ! ". The play, it is true, is more like narrative than drama and John Wilkes Booth appears diabolically out of the indigo to assassinate the author of the famous document that urged government of, for and by the people. But after all the so-called rules of drama are merely theoretical. A play must be measured by its power to hold attention, not by its adherence to this or that theory propounded by tireless theorists since Aristotle. *Abraham Lincoln*, partly because of its political actuality, partly because of the intrinsic strength of its theme and above all the tremendous acting of Liam Gaffney, was supremely successful despite its lapses from law and order.

The playgoer, still in the mood for relaxation, could not have made a better choice than *Ten Little Nigger Boys* presented by Richards-Walsh Productions. This company has a *flair* for thrillers and Agatha Christie improves on her novel in its dramatisation. Whatever I may have said above about dramatic theory, this play is a proof of the efficacy of skilful construction. Forget the improbability of the plot and you move from thrill to thrill, from bewilderment to bewilderment in your efforts to spot the master murderer who, under your very eyes, as it were, sends seven people to eternity. Noel Moffett designed a scene in which the characters might, with aesthetic comfort, have spent a full life, so that one felt all the more the poignancy of their sudden end in such generous surroundings. The acting was uniformly good.

That vastly entertaining poisoner Wainewright, better known as Janus Weathercock, found that the Italian lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* were steeped in poetry, the most absolute poetry. So much so that it became infused in their substance. Shakespeare, he maintains, has amalgamated spirit and matter into a quicksilver too slippery and subtle for the mere corporeal hands of any given actor or actress. I recalled this view at the second Richards-Walsh production of their short season at the Gaiety Theatre, realising that the handicap of that " sweet hymn in praise of love " laid an almost insuperable burden on its interpreters. Shelah Richards' Juliet had too corporeal a quality. Passion flamed too high when she gave vent to the innermost

desires of the character. Charming as she was in her bearing and declamation she did not reach the heart in the passages of young tremulous love. Cyril Cusack got much more poetry into his lines and went as near as was possible to transmuting the poetic wraith of Romeo into a substantial being, subtle, lyrical and moving. Mr. Cusack is one of the few Abbey actors who can move as easily and convincingly in plays outside the Abbey repertoire as on the native stage; his return from London has added strength not only to the National Theatre but also to the many efforts to produce serious drama in Dublin as a whole. It was a pity that Shakespeare removed Mercutio so early in the play. At least, thus it seemed the other evening when Alan McClelland played the part. He acted with an unforgettable *élan*. Maureen Delany's Nurse, however, was disappointing, the mannerisms and accent of the Abbey consorting ill with the more conventional speech of the remainder of the cast. Generally speaking, this was a meritorious performance, although there was occasional confusion on the staircase which, in itself, was an original and effective contrivance on the part of the producers.

Art Notes

by Edward Sheehy

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE

"SINCE you can draw so beautifully, why do you spend your time making those queer things?" somebody asked Picasso; and he replied: "That's the reason." Joyce might have replied similarly to the critics of *Work in Progress*; for the great artist is always compelled to extend the limits of experience, and there comes a stage where the conventional mode of expression is no longer adequate to body forth the new discovery. Braque, Modigliani and many of the Surrealists did undoubtedly enlarge both our aesthetic and emotional experience; they showed that painting could be creative out of an inner sense of the significance of form and colour, and not merely or only the record of emotive fragments in the appearances of things, or illustrations dependent for their meaning on literary or historical

associations. In fact they destroyed a theory of painting widely held though rarely expressed so explicitly as it was by Doctor Johnson when he said: "Painting, Sir, can illustrate, but cannot inform." On the other hand it cannot be denied that a great deal of French experimental painting in the first decade of this century went very much farther in its revolt from convention than was either necessary or effective. Faced with the mysteries of the subconscious, Wordsworth's "dim and undetermined sense of unknown modes of being" its achievement was an explanation of *ignotum per ignotius*; or was, that fatally easy thing, a *pastiche* of genuine subjective art.

The Exhibition of Subjective Art, held in Dublin in January, repeated most of the features of the movement that was modern in France about forty years ago; except that here there was more than a suspicion of *pastiche* in spite of Mr. Herbert Read's fulsome introduction. Mr. Read is a very distinguished critic; but here one felt that, either he had not seen the exhibition (It was asserted in the public press that he had seen reproductions) or that he was deliberately writing down to an audience to whom the whole subjective convention was unfamiliar. He adopted the tone of a nursemaid with a frightened child: "Look now; there is really nothing to be afraid of." And as a result he was guilty of considerable over-simplification.

"As one who believes," he says, "that art best flourishes where the spirit of man is free but his horizon circumscribed . . . I have expectantly awaited these signs in Ireland." We may agree about the circumscribed horizon; but hardly about our freedom of the spirit when we remember the fate of nine out of ten of our best writers at the hands of the censorship board. Dublin is no Periclean Athens. Mr. Read asks us to believe that this exhibition is "representative of the latest phases of the contemporary movement," albeit with a regional accent. This "modern movement," he says, "is international, as was Hellenic art and the art of the Middle Ages." Here I disagree. Hellenic art became international because produced by a society whose civilisation went to form Western Civilisation. The Art of the Middle Ages was international because rooted in a philosophy which was itself international. Subjective art, in all its forms, belongs to phase in which civilisation is going through a phase of distintegration, an analytic phase. It belongs to a period

without synthesis : where there is no central philosophy uniting a multiplying variety of human activity ; and in which therefore each department seeks to erect a universal philosophy on its partial and exclusive view of reality. Such a phase is necessary and vital to any kind of historical development ; though most of its products are vitiated by the fact that their function is destructive rather than constructive. If subjective art is international, it is so not for the same reasons as were Hellenic and Mediaeval art ; nor can it have the same relations to any community. It is a megalopolitan product, individualist and moreover emphasising certain limited aspects of the individual. It is, in effect, subjective idealism translated into art and endures the same solipsism which vitiates the more extreme forms of that philosophy. In the words of some of its early apologists :

“ There is nothing real outside ourselves ; there is nothing real except the coincidence of a sensation and an individual mental tendency. Be it far from us to throw any doubts upon the existence of the objects which impress our senses ; but, rationally speaking, we can only experience certitude in respect of the images which they produce in the mind.”¹

The danger of such a theory becomes obvious if we examine the drawings and paintings of schizophrenics whose subjectivist orthodoxy is above reproach. I have seen drawings in textbooks of psychopathology which would have taken an honourable place in any exhibition of subjective art. And the danger is that the result may have no relation to any universal experience and serve merely to illustrate some subjective kink in the artist.

I was therefore unable to accede to Mr. Read's request for complete openmindedness in viewing this exhibition ; I merely tried to see it for what it claimed to be. Subjectivism is by now a convention like any other and capable of all the abuses to which any convention is open. The idioms here were quite familiar ; too familiar in fact. I doubt if there was one painting in which the painter said anything either profound or original. The greater number of the paintings could be called subjective only by a misuse of the word. Some of them were just pleasantly decorative : Paul Egstorff's *Composition*, in a manner

¹ Gleizes and Metzinger. *Du Cubisme*, Paris, 1912,

familiarised by the late Mainie Jellett : Patrick Scott's *The Zoo* with more naïveté and originality. Doreen Vanston is the most effective of the experimental vanguard with *The Wanderers* and *A Dying Animal*. The work of Nick Nicholls and Stephen Gilbert seems to me intellectual rather than subjective ; that is its symbols and form combinations are derived more from psychoanalysis and anthropology than from any intuition into the nature of reality. Thurloe Connolly seems very much under the influence of the Douanier Rousseau, particularly in his wedding group.

The Exhibition of Fine Colour Prints² at the Victor Waddington Galleries was very pleasant. It included woodcuts, linocuts and lithographs all by artists working in England. Exhibits showed the excellent craftsmanship which the woodcut has called into being in England. In general the weight of emphasis was on decoration. The show included work by Agnes Miller Parker, John Farleigh and Claude Flight, the latter well known for his book on the linocut and colour printing. I liked the classical perfection of John Farleigh's lithographs, *Polyanthus* and *Madame Pierre Oger, Rose*. The work of Grierson was the most modern and interesting in composition and the subtly restrained use of colour.

Maurice Wilks is a young painter whose work, as far as this exhibition³ shows, is completely derivative. Here are tricks of technique and chunks of 'atmosphere' transcribed from the work of Humbert Craig, McKelvey, Sean Keating and Paul Henry. The whole underlying approach is popular, sentimental, 'drawing-room.' Doubtless many artists served apprenticeship to their predecessors ; but the danger in Dublin is that this pleasantly competent stuff will attract the furbishers of domestic interiors, and we shall be encumbered with one more popular painter.

The Dublin Painters⁴ presented a rather motley show which however, included some interesting work by Norah McGuinness and Nano Reid. Nano Reid's *Bere Countryman* was a strong, forthright piece of work, refreshingly unsentimental in contrast to the air of ninetyish affectation of so many of the exhibits. I liked the cold tones and simple composition of Norah McGuinness'

² Jan. 27th to Feb. 4th.

³ Victor Waddington Galleries : 9th—19th Feb.

⁴ Gallery, 7 Stephen's Green. Feb. 18th—March 2nd.

January Seascape; her *Model on the Yellow Couch* was more effective in colour than in drawing. Mary Swanzy, at this show, seemed to me to fall below her usual level. Patrick Hennessy's *Miserere* had his usual atmosphere of morbid gloom expressed with his considerable technical finesse. Mainie Jellett's *Circus* had a liveliness of colour and a freedom of composition in contrast to the bulk of her work. By her death Dublin has lost a painter of sincerity and originality.

BOOK REVIEWS

IRISH FOLK TALES. Collected by Jeremiah Curtin (1835-1906). Edited with Introduction and Notes by Séamus Ó Duilearga. The Educational Company. 6s.

Many picturesque versions of our folk stories appeared in the early days of the literary revival, but it is surprising to realise that this book is the first actual collection of folk tales in English, which has been published for almost half-a-century. *Hero-Tales of Ireland* and Curtin's other collections, like those of Patrick Kennedy, are almost unobtainable nowadays. These sixteen tales, which are now published for the Folklore of Ireland Society, originally appeared in the New York paper, *The Sun*, during the years 1892-93. Unfortunately, owing to the war, the *Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin*, published in the Spring of 1941 by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, has not been available; but Mr. Ó Duilearga has been able to give a few extracts from the book, dealing with Curtin's experiences in Ireland. The Irish-American collector made five extensive visits to Ireland for the purpose of collecting traditional stories, and it is timely that his pioneer work should be recognised. His own oral knowledge of Irish was limited, and in taking down these stories he had to have the help of an interpreter, but his work was skilled and conscientious. Mr. Ó Duilearga has contributed an interesting preface and very useful notes to the volume.

The stories themselves are variants of well-known types: the epic or the sage story, several of them from the Fianna cycle, modified by generalised folk motifs, and local variations on general folk themes, such as *The Tinker of Ballingarry and his Three Wishes*. There are some very interesting notes by Pádraig Ó Siocfhradha ("An Seabhac") on some of the traditional storytellers whom Jeremiah Curtin met. "An Seabhac" himself, at the age of ten, saw the collector as he passed on his way to Dingle on a cart one day in the early nineties. He gives us vivid glimpses of the Kerry storytellers in the old days, Muiris Ó Loingsigh, Micí na gCloch, and Diarmaid Ó Dubháin.

M. D.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GRAIL LEGEND. By Arthur C. L. Brown. Harvard University Press. \$5.00.

The influence of Celtic mythology on the Grail Legend has been frequently traced, and Mr. Arthur Brown has attempted in this book to analyse similarities between pagan and Christian episodes in the cycle. Vague and mystical speculation has surrounded this unsolved subject, and perhaps for that reason Mr. Brown has made no mention in his bibliography of that huge compilation, *The Holy Grail: Its Legends and Symbolism*, by A. E. Waite, published in 1933. Despite its arbitrary and highly individual interpretation of this fascinating subject, A. E. Waite's book dealt with many theories to which Mr. Brown makes no reference. One of the most interesting was the theory that the legend symbolises a religious cult which had originated in the ancient Celtic Church itself. Mr. Brown's method of analysis is almost embarrassing in its directness. He takes some of the well known Irish and Welsh romances, which tell of journeys into the Land of Wonders, and then compares their motifs and detail with the twelfth century romances of Chrétien de Troyes. This thesis is not for the general reader, however, as Mr. Brown numbers the texts alphabetically and compares them by letter. One would, therefore, require constant reference not only the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, but to various Irish and Welsh texts. It must be admitted that Mr. Brown, at times, is capable of discovering the obvious. On page 334, for instance, he observes "It has not been, I think, observed that *Gailleach Bheara*, 'The Hag of Beare,' is another personification of Ireland."

M. D.

LUCKY POET. A Self-Study in Literature and Political Ideas. By Hugh MacDiarmid (Charles Murray Grieve). Methuen. 21s.

This is not a book, but a personality. It begins with a frontispiece, with a slender man in kilts poised like a dancer or a light-weight boxer, but I think there was a rapier there too, a dazzling thing with a blue point, which the unimaginative camera failed to register. For this, Ladies and Gentlemen, is one of Scotland's Elect. Two hundred years ago he would have carried a sword among European Courts, the bane of English espionage, and serenaded a queen with one side of his mouth while with the other side he cajoled from the King, her husband, an expedition strong enough to free his native Scotland. And had he succeeded, the Bonnie Prince, of a certainty, would have beheaded him later on. For he is that kind. He would have concerned himself with awkward things like reform, shorn the great nobles of their privileges, and insisted that the poor should share in all other things as well as in the privilege of dying for their country. And one fine day he would find himself climbing the high road to a hempen necktie, or die in some sham brawl with a dagger in his side. He is, I repeat, just that kind of man.

But now, when real adventuring is an intellectual, and no longer a purely physical, affair, when world ideas are the world's courts, he is still a Scot, but a Scot of that large tradition whose heritage is to be a citizen of the world; and those appreciations of himself, both as person and writer, which he sheds all over this book, can be regarded in the light of letters of introduction from his peers to his public. They crop up from all corners of the universe, but

certainly the most exact and imaginative estimate of him is that of a fellow countryman who called himself Lewis Grassie Gibbon, a young writer who died young. This, or part of it, I quote because, coming from an intimate, I do not think it could be bettered :

"He seems to have done, seen, and read everything. He launched the Scottish P.E.N. He launched the ship of Scottish Nationalism. Probably . . . he invented the Celts, staged the rising of William Wallace, led a schiltroon at Falkirk, and wrote Dunbar's poetry for him. At the moment he is in the Faroe Islands ; the Faroes will probably declare their Independence, cast off from Denmark, and elect him Archon for life.

Between whiles of reforming the world and chastising the English (by some slight accident he was missing from the battle of Flodden, and has been making up for it ever since) he writes, in collaboration with his "distant cousin," Hugh MacDiarmid, the only poetry Scotland has produced in the last three hundred years, stuff unexpected and beautiful, mellow and keen. The "Hymns to Lenin" are among the world's most magnificent hymns to the high verities of life. He has shown the Scottish speech capable of dealing, tremendously and vividly, with the utmost extremes of passion and pity. All good art is propaganda, and Grieve, *ex officio* or otherwise, is a splendid propagandist. Paradoxically, his weakness in prose is his delight in word manipulation. He might refer to an adversary as a negligible person ; instead he refers to him as, say, a 'negligible, nefarious, knock-knee'd nonentity.' Like bringing up the tumbrils and guillotine to execute a rat."

And from this extract you may begin to realise what I meant when I said that this was not a book but a personality. For myself, not having met him in the flesh, I am not quite certain that he is not all myth, even though he squares up at me from the frontispiece, pelts me with quotations, and invites me to read him as he would invite me to a bull-fight in which, as it happens, I am the bull, he the Matador, dangling his subject and whisking it briskly away as I butt in for a good gore. No, I am not at all certain he is in the flesh, though he has all his flesh-alibis ready for inspection, of course. He can show that he was born in Langholm, in Dumfriesshire, on the 11th August, 1894, of solid and pleasant parents, and that he used the magnificent library of that small burgh to great and enduring effect, but I have a fancy myself that he was born of a conspiracy and a round-table conference where Marx and Engels were a bit bored by Rabbie Burns, and where the Irish Representatives lost him to the Scottish Representatives, which was our loss but Grieve-MacDiarmid's gain, for, certainly, had we won him, he would have spent very many years in English gaols, caused riots in the Dail during the Treaty Debates, and ever since been a man on the run ; that is, if he had not died in the Post Office, or ousted Pearse, and then—he would be, as the other lonely unpensioned are, a pious memory and a marble bust.

He is, as I have said, just that kind of man.

This very many-sidedness, however, which he glories in, has its draw-

backs. In Ireland, we had our Pearse and McDonagh, our Hyde, Yeats, Griffith and De Valera. It is outside one man's compass to roll those figures, like history, into one person. Outside of Scotland, Hugh MacDiarmid is known only for his poetry, the other things are local and incidental, what one might call 'Character values,' and for a poet of his quality it is surely a waste of time and valuable energy to concentrate upon the figure he cuts locally. The *petit bourgeois* are the same in all countries except Russia. MacDiarmid's poetry is a headline of what the real Scotland may produce in the future if, like Ireland, it remembers its ancient and separate culture. Such poetry calls for a single heart and no byeways. Unfortunately for MacDiarmid, he is a Pathfinder who must, of necessity, quarrel about a right-of-way, and with an empire of bourgeois space around him, he must stand on the top of his voice to get any kind of hearing. There are silences that can choke a poet. The danger is that continued protest may externalise a man and stay him psychically in a single gesture, so that what is real in him goes to feed that phantom—the figure one cuts in the eyes of the world. Hugh MacDiarmid, to put it plainly, is too much concerned with himself as a world figure.

And this latter is of real importance since it has touched his later poetry. He would take the whole world of knowledge as his work, and slap you with a sackful of 'facts' as solidly as any two-guinea text book. The long extracts he quotes from recent work are fantasies of allusion, a marvellous display of downright scholarship or merely omnivorous reading, impressive certainly as a *tour de force* but—may I say it?—dull as poetry. Facts cannot be used for their own sake, or for the sake of showing the extent of one's reading. Poetry has its own structure, facts are important there as all accuracies are, but in the finest poetry they are so twisted and strained imaginatively as to become something other than themselves. The trouble, and the art, is to use them in just that wise.

There are two books to follow this. I, for one, await them with the greatest impatience. And what a present they would make for some of our Anti-Irish Revivalists, if one could find any of them sufficiently sensitive to real cultural values to be influenced enough to realise that real civilization is the product of many local cultures flourishing and thriving within their separate race areas. The trouble is that most people are lazy and uneager to apply themselves for any length of time to anything that needs a stirring brain. In Ireland, with the road clear ahead, we are finding this, for after 20 years of something very like freedom, the old hoary tory voice, telling the old hoary story of empire, is as loud and impertinent as ever.

PADRAIC FALLON.

IRISH HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, 1172-1922. Edited by Edmund Curtis and R. B. McDowell. Methuen. 18/-.

This source book, a collection of the chief source-documents of Irish history from the English invasion, will be of the greatest benefit and assistance to students of Irish history, and a time-saver. Some months ago, for instance, I wanted to look at the Act of Union, and I looked through half-a-dozen books in which it might have been before coming on one in which it was. It is, of

course, in this book, together with such other prime documents as Adrian's Bull, the Great Charter of Ireland, the Statutes of Kilkenny, Poynings' Law, and so on.

The book is not, of course, fully comprehensive, nor does it pretend to be. The editors characterise it in the introduction as "selective," and any book of the sort must be selective. All the documents are quite outside the confines of one volume, and everybody will have a pet document or two that he would have liked to have seen included. I should like, for instance, to see the gist of Wm. Molyneux's arguments in the *Case*, and the incomparable *Fourth Letter of M. B. Drapier*, included. But no one has a right to complain because every possible document is not included. Compilers have always a reasonable right of selection.

The student will also remark that no documents of pure Gaelic origin are included, i.e. that the selection is confined to things which illustrate the English invasion, and the ebb and flow of conditions in its wake, and the dawn and growth of Colonial Nationalism and the later Nineteenth Century Nationalism. But this is what the compilers set out to do, and it is reasonable to suggest that the other side of the picture must be done separately by people who are competent to elucidate the original documents.

Occasionally, the notes on the documents may be misleading. The note to Document No. 10, for instance, *Proposed Extension of English law to the Native Irish*, says:—

In this order Edward I raised the question of the extension of English law and liberty to the Irish race, as a result of a report made to him by his Justiciar in Ireland, Robert D'Ufford, sent in 1277. D'Ufford in his report says that "the Irish have offered 7,000 (*recte* 8,000) marks for a grant from the King for the common laws of the English, and much desire to have an answer thereupon."

One would gather from that that in 1277 the Irish had been willing to pay money for the privilege of abolishing their own law and adopting English law. But it is clear that whatever "Irish" made this request, it referred entirely to those living in the Pale, who could not appeal to Irish law and had not the protection of English law, though perforce living under it.

P. S. O'HEGARTY.

J. B. YEATS' LETTERS TO HIS SON, W. B. YEATS, AND OTHERS, 1869-1922. Edited with a Memoir by Joseph Hone and a Preface by Oliver Elton. Faber and Faber, Ltd. Price 16s. net.

In reading Professor Elton's preface to this fascinating book, I was pleasantly reminded of an evening—nearly forty years ago, when I first went out at the invitation of John Yeats to visit his house at Churchtown, at the foot of the Dublin Mountains. The principal guest on that occasion was a tall and most distinguished-looking Englishman, whose name I did not very distinctly hear on a first introduction. Then, a little later someone asked me if I was acquainted with "any of Professor Elton's work," and I suddenly realized that here in the very room with me was the author of the "Introduction to Michael Drayton," a volume which had, some years earlier, provided me

with an introduction to one of my favourite poets. I was brought over (probably by John Yeats himself), to sit beside the professor, and I am rather afraid that in the excitement of meeting for the first time an authority on Michael Drayton I monopolized more than my fair share of the professor's time, but Drayton enthusiasts were not, at that time, very plentiful, and I have a vivid memory of that conversation about a poet whom we both loved. I remember, too, that as we talked, John Yeats was busy with his pencil, and the sketches which he made then of both Oliver Elton and of his youthful admirer had afterwards a place in the Catalogue of the John Quinn collection.

On more than one occasion, in the days that followed that first visit to the little house at Churchtown I had the great privilege of walking out in the summer evenings with the painter as he went home after his day's work in Stephen's Green or in Harrington Street. John Yeat's letters have that quality which all great letters have, of giving an impression of conversation, and reading through this collection which Mr. J. M. Hone has chosen with such a fine selective sense, I seem to hear again the gentle, rather husky tone of the old artist's voice, see again the bright, interested eyes behind the glasses. That walk was always a delight to me, for Yeats was interested in everyone and everything, and his delight in the view of the mountains as it came to us—particularly at Orwell Bridge, on the river Dodder—seemed to hold for him an ever-renewed delight.

I have often wondered whether John Yeats will be best remembered as a painter, a letterwriter, an essayist or a talker. For all these arts, in which he excelled, were so intermingled in that rare personality that only a mingling of all four can give us a picture of the man as he was. He talked continuously as he stood before the easel, or walked backwards (invariably stumbling over a mat or two as he walked) and many a sitter or visitor must have brought away a rich store of wit and wisdom from the studio at No. 7 Stephen's Green.

I have heard it said that the portraits painted by John Yeats had, on many occasions, to be taken from him almost by force, for it was his habit to re-touch, re-paint even re-model to such an extent that the "finished" portrait bore far less resemblance to the sitter than the original sketch—or, at least, the painting in its original form. In 1918 The Talbot Press published a volume of his *Essays Irish and American*, a book in which—as A.E. writes, in a brief foreword—"the reader will find thoughts which are profound, said so simply that their wisdom might be overlooked." The little book is, indeed, packed with witty and profound criticism and appreciation of the many famous artists and writers, from Samuel Butler to J. M. Synge, whom he had known intimately; and yet I cannot help feeling that these *Essays*—brilliant and life-like as they are—have been, to a certain extent "worked on" for the purpose of publication in the American magazines in which they first appeared. In the letters, on the other hand, we have the original sketches, unworked on, and with all freshness which characterised the great conversationalist as he held his listeners spell-bound. Only those who have met and known the men and women whose names are scattered in a bewildering variety and prodigality through these pages, can appreciate to the full the skill, amounting to genius, with which their living breathing images are brought before us in a few sentences—a line—sometimes, a phrase. It is, again, the difference between (say) the finished portraits of John O'Leary and Isaac Butt (both of which are

reproduced finely in this latest edition of the Letters) and those splendid and vivid little pencil drawings which are also represented. John Yeats was apparently almost indifferent as to the ultimate fate of these graphic "notes" and he would set them down indiscriminately on the margin of a letter or on the margins of any book which was within reach at the moment. I have, for instance, a striking pencil portrait of Lady Gregory which he made in about 1902 on the title page of "The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges," another volume "Lectures on Metaphysics" by Sir William Hamilton (1859) which bears on the title the autograph "J. Yeats, Sandymount Cottage 1861," is decorated throughout with delightful pencil sketches of men and women and horses and yet another such volume which is beside me as I write is John Stuart Mill's "Essays on some Unsettled questions of Political Economy (1844)." This bears an undated autograph "J. B. Yeats, Sligo" and was evidently the artist's companion during the days of his legal studies, for it is crowded with figures be-wigged and be-gowned, with whom he must have come into contact at the Law Courts—many of them easily recognisable as distinguished members of the Irish Bar in the sixties. Mr. Hone has done well in giving us these drawings which throw such a fine sidelight on the letters, for the words which A.E. wrote about the portraits is equally applicable to the letters:—"Rarely has he portrayed any, young or old, where something like a soul does not look at us through the eyes." This handsomely produced and well edited volume, which supplements and, in a sense, completes the Passages from the Letters (Cuala Press 1917), Essays (Talbot Press 1918), Further Letters (Cuala Press 1920), and Early Memories (Cuala Press 1923), is one which every wise collector will acquire, for it gives us a richer and more authentic account of the Ireland of 1890-1922 than is to be found elsewhere (even in the pages of George Moore).

BUT THE EARTH ABIDETH. By William Soutar. Andrew Dakers. 5s.

EARTH FIRE AND TIDINGS. Runa Press, Monkstown. 2s. each.

SPEECH TO THE DOCK. By J. Patrick Byrne. Clontarf Press.

"But the Earth Abideth," the seventh or eighth book of poems by the late Mr. William Soutar, is described in the author's note as an attempt "to outline the background of universal law against which the compulsions of war reveal their obedience to necessity." The verse form is "a deliberate breaking away from the intellectual mode which has prevailed during the past decade," and the following stanza is fairly typical:

"Time is no traitor ; and the rage
of man is not Time's child :
The ruination of an age
grows with the hands that build."

There are occasional felicities of expression and subtleties of thought, and the whole sequence is obviously a work undertaken in high seriousness and sincerity. But stanzas like the above repeated almost entirely without variation of rhythm, becomes monotonous long before the two-hundred-and-fiftieth.

"The Earth Fire" carries on its cover a reproduction of a masterly pencil portrait of the Editor, Mr. Jonathan Hanaghan, by Sean O'Sullivan, and con-

tains more than twenty poems by various hands. There are very good things in Alex. Comfort's "Fifth Elegy", and Roy McFadden's "Letter from the Mournes", rich in thought and feeling, is probably the most satisfying poem in the broadsheet. Henry Treece's "A Thief to His Lord" has a deliberate violence of expression but no novelty of conception, and his other poem lacks the precision of his best work. Mr. Hanaghan bludgeons his readers with enormous energy and the shrinking recipient of his rhetoric may well murmur, "Gently, brother, gently, pray!" A good deal of the verse in "Earth Fire" is rather raw, more remarkable for vehemence than profundity or grace. Amidst the hurly-burly two poems by John Irvine attain a quiet dignity.

The cover drawing for "Tidings" is by Sean Keating, and is perhaps the best thing of the broadsheet. The most striking poem is "Youth", by Henry Treece—very "apocalyptic" with a fine second stanza. Ferdinand Levy's "Harlem Depression" is a success in its genre, and "Saint Stephen's Day", by Leslie H. Daiken has point and vivacity. Several of the remaining poems are derivative and rather woolly, and in some a tired poetic diction lodges uncomfortably in a modern setting. Gerald Fine's "Thy Lovely Lady" comes soothingly and with a pleasant little turn of Caroline wit. Jonathan Hanaghan is represented by "Elohim" and "Immanuel." A stanza of "Immanuel" may suggest the exuberant energy of the whole:

"Vain its sheer abyss
aeons uplifting ;
vain its shuddering kiss,
glacial sifting."

Both the "Earth Fire" and "Tidings" have been most attractively produced by the Runa Press.

All the five poems in Mr. J. Patrick Byrne's little booklet have warmth and spontaneity. "The Dark Stroller," with its deliberate echoes of translations from the Gaelic is moving and delicate. The title-poem, "Speech to the Dock," has the makings of a fine poem, not yet worked to its full finish. This little book has good things out of proportion to its size.

W. P. M.

AN IRISH FLORA. By D. A. Webb. (Illus). Dundalgan Press. 8s. 6d. net. (By Post, 8s. 10d.).

This very neat and compact Irish Flora will be welcomed by botanical students for its freedom from the names of many English plants not found in Ireland. It is intended to supplement Dr. Praeger's *Botanist in Ireland*, and of the 1,050 species in the Irish lists, over 800 are fully described, while 121 of the rarer plants are more briefly dealt with, and the remainder, requiring a specialist to identify them with certainty, are printed as an appendix, with distributions indicated.

There are several additional features in this little book, which would be invaluable were they fully developed—a certain incompleteness makes them somewhat disappointing. There is a list of Irish names for plants which contains only about 80, on the ground that vernacular names vary so much all over the country and that it is better to restrict the list to definitely well-known examples,

This is utterly inadequate in a handbook for students at the present phase in Irish education. The students in our Universities come from every county, and an Irish Flora would be expected to have each county's share to be complete. Moloney has 1,000 Irish names of plants in his *Ethno-Botany* published in 1919, and there is *Luibhleabhrán: Irish and Scottish Gaelic Names of Herbs* by Edmund Hogan, S.J., both of which are authoritative. A group of 138 outline figures of points in the *Analytical Keys*, which would be obscure without illustration. These are not happily displayed for practical work—although referred to in the preliminary explanations of the scheme, they come without a word of type, merely numbered, and are followed without reference to their use, by the main contents of the Flora. When the next edition of this work is published, it is suggested that Mr. Tempest, the publisher, be allowed to print them in miniature on the margin of the page to which they belong, as was successfully done in Dr. E. Estyn Evans' *Irish Heritage*, a year or so ago.

A most useful aid to field-work is the printing of a scale of 6 inches near the edge of the front and back end-papers, and in the middle of these pages, a ladder of horizontal fractions of an inch. There is a short list of technical terms defined, where Stamens, Sepals, and Lobes do not appear, and I merely point this out as an oversight.

The attempt made to stabilise in Ireland the English pronunciation of Latin terms used in Botany—in fact all scientific terms—for the reason that the large number of English-speaking botanists would not easily understand any other pronunciation, is, I would imagine, a forlorn hope. There is a pronouncing glossary of 25 pages, and although the AY sound of the vowel *a*, is sometimes rendered as in FAR, the same accent is used for both sounds. But a continent of learned students exists which does not use this debased form of the old classical tongue—and the perpetuation of it is hardly to be advocated in order that conformity be established—the English A, E and I sounds are lamentable in spoken Latin.

The outline figures are beautifully clear and explanatory, and are the work of Miss Hilda Parkes—and the type used in the letterpress is of the excellence which characterizes all work coming from the Dundalgan Press, and the book is of pocket size and indispensable to the botanical student, apart from the minor defects which can be rectified in a later edition, if approved.

A. K.

THE SECRET ISLAND: POEMS AND PLAYS IN VERSE. By Mona Douglas.
Victoria Press, Ltd., Douglas, Isle of Man.

There are many references to the Isle of Man in our ancient mythological stories, and all of them are mysterious. Irish heroes had a habit of disappearing into the mists of that druidic isle and re-appearing with disconcerting suddenness. The three short plays in this book have, therefore, a particular interest for us, since they are based on the sagas and traditional lore of Mann. Long ago, when the island became too crowded with human activities, Mananan and his sea-companies withdrew to an invisible isle; but they returned from time to time, according to the traditional storytellers. The Secret Island is common, of course, to all Celtic lore: Miss Douglas defines it as "that region of ecstasy

on the brink of the final, formless Deep which is the source and end of all things." The belief which she has expressed in these words is the inspiration of the plays. In their mood they recall those early years of the Irish literary revival when action seemed less than reverie, and poetry only came into its own at the shadowy close of day. Such a mood of reverie must come again though its literary terms will be changed. But the absence of that mood at present gives a twofold nostalgia to these symbolic plays. Their action is the choice between the outward and the inner worlds.

. All things are dreams,
Or thoughts in the mind ; the things we think are true
Of life and death, of all we see or handle,
Are apprehended only in our minds ;
And those who know all things as images
May seek behind them and find reality—
Yet must the images seem wholly real
To all who would fear to think life but a shadow.

The second play, *Teeval of the Sea*, which presents Conchubar in an unexpected light, has been produced at Douglas and, in so far as it evokes a mood, should be effective. The form, with its chorus of Wave Women, suggests the influence of Gordon Bottomley and Yeats in his Dance Plays. The third play, *Blanid*, deals with the fine story of Cuchulain and Curoi, but here the form is too episodic.

M. D.

A PRIVATE COUNTRY. By Lawrence Durrell. Faber and Faber, Ltd. 6s. net.

One must be very careful, in reviewing new poetry, not to seek for what is not there. For instance, one must not look to Mr. Durrell for passion of any kind. Most of the poems in this, the first collection of his verse, are either elegiac or satiric. The elegiac poems contain little sadness, the satirical poems little bitterness. In fact, the whole book is just a little bit dull. What Mr. Durrell *can* supply is a series of landscapes, sketched in Greece and the Greek Islands, and heavily shaded with nostalgia. Or, to vary the metaphor slightly, a series of water-colours ; one would not call Mr. Durrell's pictures watery—"aqueous" would be a better word. Here is one of them, from *At Epidaurus*, perhaps the best poem in the book :

A temple set severely like a dice
In the vale's Vergilian shade ; once apparently
Ruled from the whitest light of the summer :
A formula for marble when the clouds
Troubled the architect, and the hill spoke
Volumes of thunder, the sibyllic god wept.
Here we are safe from everything but ourselves,
The dying leaves and the reports of love.

Mr. Durrell has made the most of his period of Government service in the Eastern Mediterranean. Among the places named in his titles are Corfu, Arcadia, Argos, Corinth, Ithaca, Athens, Nemea, as well as the temple of Aesculapius at Epidaurus. Mr. Durrell is an earnest tourist, and knows his

classical lore, but when one comes to consider his style, one finds it hard to believe that he has ever read any poetry written earlier than 1910. Echoes of Eliot are everywhere, nor is Pound forgotten. When Mr. Durrell tries to shake off Eliot and inject a little more colour into his writing, he resembles the Surrealists and, probably unconsciously, Wallace Stevens. Stevens is an American with a big reputation in his own country and almost none in England, so that Mr. Durrell may be quite unaware of his existence. This is a pity, as he has done what, in his more lyrical and colourful moments, Mr. Durrell is trying to do, and done it a great deal better.

VIVIAN H. S. MERCIER.

MALACHI HORAN REMEMBERS. By Dr. George A. Little. President, Old Dublin Society. Gill. 6s.

The debate last year in the Senate on *The Tailor and Ansty* indicated very clearly that our rustic politicians do not believe that writers should call a spade a spade. No rude shock awaits the reader of this rival book from the Dublin Hills. "Robust in his patriotism, racy in his speech, in all things typical of the Irish people at their purest and truest, Malachi Horan is portrayed here in unforgettable pages,"—so runs the enthusiastic announcement on the wrapper. Dr. Little writes in a pleasant, idealistic strain, and he is an excellent compère. Over hills, blossoming with furze, to the sound of lark-song, we approach reverently the little cottage above Jobstown.

As a hare to its form, Malachi's cottage crouches in its bawn. There is a satisfying harmony, ruling all its components. The house suits its environment as if it had grown in this spot chosen for it by the selective hand of Nature. The dark brown of the thatch seems but a reflection of the richer russet of the stacks in the haggard. Its stone walls are of the stone of the living hills. The smoke from the chimney is the little brother of the restless clouds. In audible harmony mingle the complaints of the wind with the cow's lowing in the byre, the watch-dog's bark by the gate with the metallic tinkle of the mare's hooves on the cobbled yard; and these, to a single motif, are blended with the music of the mountains by the anealing of the green plover's twice-repeated note.

Within the lowly cottage the very sunlight is modest and respectful. "The plunger-churn is mellowed by it, and it adds romance even to the horse-collars on the wall. The great settle-bed below the window is only revealed by a soft glow along its furthest edge." Malachi Horan himself is presented to us dramatically at the right moment and in the right light.

On his face met the light from the window and that from the fire, the latter half-smurred on each of its sides by two great sods of surface turf. A square face of great power, eyes grey-green beneath a penthouse of bushy white brows; lips so firm set as to be almost immobile; skin tanned and wrinkled as a late be-tided strand; woolly-white hair and side-whiskers—a face set to the world, or to a purpose, but one which yet could smile more easily than frown.

It will be perceived from these extracts that Dr. Little, like Nature, has a selective hand.

Despite Dr. Little's anxiety to represent Malachi Horan as a paragon of Irish virtue, content to accept his humble lot for almost a century, the vigorous personality of this ancient storyteller may be sensed. Echoes of far off traditional merriment linger in memory, wild drinking in mountain taverns, and all night dancing at the Fair of Rathfarnham on Walking Sunday. It says much for Dr. Little's wise forbearance and tact that these subjects are not unduly stressed. For Malachi Horan's own philosophy of life is terse, though we dare not say it is typical of our Irish people.

What is the secret of a long life? Well, I will tell you. Plenty of whiskey with the hard work needed to get the money to pay for it. That is the way, though I am not saying that every man should try it. The book is packed with stories of the old days long before the steam-tram smoked its way to Tallaght, descriptions of old customs which have lingered among the Dublin Hills, and traditional memories of '98. The notes at the foot of the pages are simple and sometimes over-helpful. On page 121, we read "Boys-o'-boys—Dr. Foley, D.Litt., thinks that this expletive began as 'Oh! boys, oh! boys.'"

M. D.

LANDMARKS: A BOOK OF TOPOGRAPHICAL VERSE FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.
Chosen by G. Rostrevor Hamilton and John Arlott. Cambridge University Press. 8s. 6d.

It is hard to believe that this is the first anthology of topographical verse which has ever appeared in England, except for Longfellow's *Poems of Places*, a forgotten book of the 'eighties. But anthologists have kept strictly to the tradition of Palgrave, and most anthologies of English verse are more or less similar in their merits and faults. By breaking from a conservative and stupefying tradition, Mr. Rostrevor Hamilton and Mr. Arlott have released an astonishing amount of good verse and brought clearly into view a grossly neglected section of English poetry. So great has been the range of material from which they had to choose that they have been able to pass their own arbitrary bye-laws. For instance, they have excluded *Cooper's Hill*, though Denham's famous poem had great influence, because the strictly topographical interest in it is subordinate. They have also omitted verse in which the natural scene is so dominated by mood, as in Wordsworth, that the landscape is a mere background. The mere presence of place-names was not considered enough, so fine place-poems by Housman, Thomas Hardy and others have been excluded. The preface contains many interesting ideas which occurred to the editors as a result of their research. The dominating influence of the classics persisting through so many centuries in so many forms and degrees, veiled and hid the English scene, and most of the major poets, of course, were subject to that dissembling influence. It is significant, as the editors point out, that in their selection from the works of the last fifty years the ratio of complete poems quoted to passages from poems is far higher than in any other period. Various explanations of this fact other than the reasons given in the preface might be propounded. For one thing, the poetic "week-end" habit might be mentioned, though the editors refrain from mentioning the term of

opprobrium. Undoubtedly, the rapid disappearance of the unspoilt English countryside has given a nostalgic charm to its last villages and beauty spots. It is significant that so many latter day poets, quoted in this book, have written in fierce denunciation of the spreading thin red line of bungalows. Sometimes modern poets have even been afraid to mention a place name in a poem. "Although the poet may have a single place in his mind's eye, he avoids revealing its whereabouts as carefully as the nature-lover who will not betray his favourite bit of country." This is quite true. Indeed many English authors, who have found an unspoilt retreat for the week-ends, will not reveal where it is for fear of the news spreading. The tragic implications of this need hardly be stressed.

The poems are not arranged chronologically, but according to place. London, Out of London, The Home Counties and the Southern Counties, Southward to Cornwall, Northward to Westmoreland and so forth. Seventy-eight authors are represented in this anthology and on every page something of interest will be found. Part of the pleasure of such a book is the discovery of a poem about a place which one has visited. Here, then, is a long needed and much wanted tribute of devotion to the *genius loci*.

M. D.

MAD GRANDEUR. By Oliver St. John Gogarty. Constable. 10s.

One hesitates to say that eighteenth century Ireland offers many opportunities to the enterprising novelist, for in these days of rapid circulation very few novels can be taken as serious works of art. It is not quite uncomplimentary to suggest that Dr. Gogarty's novel of this neglected period trails its length somewhat in the manner of Pope's famous Alexandrine. The truth is that Dr. Gogarty has attempted to write an adventure according to the formula used every day by commercial writers, and the formula manifestly bores him, since he is not really interested in breath-taking adventures, but in escapades of imagination. The novel starts strictly according to conventional plan. A haughty Chevalier and a beautiful lady, in flight from the Reign of Terror, are landed secretly on the Wicklow coast and are smuggled into Dublin by good friends. But Dr. Gogarty is so interested in the fire-eaters of the Ascendancy, so anxious to prove by word of mouth that the Hell Fire Club was as amusing and desperate as its name that he forgets that adventures have to be continually sustained and quickened by misadventures.

One of the main characters in the story is Martyn-Lynch, a young western landlord of native stock. When his friend, the Chevalier, is arrested by the English military as a suspected French agent, and brought to Castlebar, Martyn-Lynch determines to ride to Dublin and interview General Lake. At this point Dr. Gogarty ignores one of those laws which the writer of adventure tales must obey—the law of suspense. The Chevalier is released from the prison cell and his life is no longer at stake, so Martyn-Lynch gallops into the night on a wild goose chase. Even the climax of that adventure, the swim across the Shannon, proves comparatively unexciting, for Martyn-Lynch shrewdly chooses the narrows at Clonmacnoise, his only witness being a goat which is grazing in the adjacent churchyard.

When a writer becomes his own task-master, the reader is compelled to share his burden. The main interest of this novel is not in the narrative or vague characters, but in the genre pictures of the times : high life and low life. A grimly amusing scene entitled " The Night before Larry was Stretched " is a tribute in prose to the well-known Dublin street song. And there is an equally vigorous description of a bout of fisticuffs, for those who like that sort of thing, horse races, and—the stock-in-trade of a moribund form—the highwayman, the stage coach and the duelling party. The title of the book is not quite accurate, for the story takes place just after the Wexford rebellion and, despite moods of gaiety and nonchalance, the writer is overcome gradually by those historic miseries of our country, which have beaten down so many amusing imaginations. By way of revenge, perhaps, Dr. Gogarty sends his last Irish aristocrat, Denis St. George, off to America, when his house is burned down during the Castlebar " Races."

" The prevailing wind is west. That makes it hard to sail out, but all the more easy to come back."

" Come back to what ? " asked Denis St. George.

M. D.

BARNARDO OF STEPNEY. By A. E. Williams. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 12s. 6d. net.

The City of Dublin is famed for the number of social and philanthropical movements which began within its bounds, and among them none has achieved so much in alleviating human suffering as has the organisation commonly known as Barnardo's Homes. From the district wherein he took up his noble work in London, the great humanitarian became prominent as " Barnardo of Stepney," a cognomen of locality about which none would quibble ; but here, too, we are prone to be jealous of the fame of our notable citizens, so some of us prefer to remember him as " Barnardo of Dublin." The family have a creditable record of business and charitable activities for more than a century-and-a-half in the Irish Capital, and Thomas John, the future " Barnardo of Stepney," was born here, at 5 Upper Gardiner Street.

When a student at T.C.D., the young man was so appalled by the conditions under which the children were living in Dublin's Liberties, that there, in a small way, he began the work with which his name afterwards became associated: later in London, he decided to devote his life-work to the care of poor and friendless orphans, and when he came back to his natal city, to raise funds for the charity, his most successful meeting held in the Merrion Hall, was presided over by Dean Dickinson, his former Sunday-School principal, of Saint Anne's Church.

Controlled and organised charity at that time was not well understood—sometimes it was misunderstood and looked upon with strange suspicions—and public philanthropists were, more often than not, classed with charlatans or, at the best, as " cranks " ; but the main prospect of achievement of Dr. Barnardo's aims depended upon publicity. He saw that success and permanency were not attainable unless he could awaken the public's conscience to the realization of a common moral responsibility ; so he became a zealous missionary, as well as a competent administrator,

The author has added an informative and entertaining volume to faithful Biography: having acted for some years as private secretary to Dr. Barnardo he has been able to use material from thousands of personal letters and documents. It is an absorbing story, comprehensive, and well documented and indexed, which tells us how the dreams of one age became the realization of the next. There are thirty photographic reproductions.

J. R. H.

EDWARD DOWDEN: *An Address Delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on Trinity Monday, 1943.* By H. O. White. Dublin: University Press. 6d.

Professor White's Trinity Monday Address is a model of what such tributes should be. In twenty-two pages (a generous ration for the modest price nowadays), he does justice, neither more nor less than justice, to Dowden's contribution to English letters. It may be that at one point he does less than justice to Matthew Arnold, and a little more to Shelley; but that ground, though first broken many years ago, is still controversial. Professor White, therefore, is at liberty to tread controversially upon it.

That part of the Address might have been written by almost anyone with Professor White's abilities and knowledge. Few will quarrel with his judgments. But the concluding part gives the reader something which he will not find elsewhere. It is evident that Dowden as a man meant a great deal to the present occupant of his Chair. The personal tribute with which he closes is a testimony (such as Professor White admits is not furnished by Dowden's own work) to his charm and to his influence over those who knew him. From the way in which he has handled it, it is evident that Professor White was the man to do it; and there could be no more fitting conclusion to words spoken on such an occasion.

M. J. C.

THE MODERN TREATMENT OF YOUNG DELINQUENTS IN ENGLAND. By Helen Green. Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co. 1s.

At first sight it may seem strange that a book dealing with Juvenile Delinquency in England should be written by a Dubliner and published by a Dublin firm. The reason is not far to seek. Miss Green says in her introduction "I have taken England as a basis of study, as it has a large body of readily available information, a well-developed social organisation and a wide variety of institutions."

Of Eire, alas, no such claims can be made. Here the most recent legislation on the subject is more than thirty-five years old. Little or no cognisance is taken of the fact that child delinquency is from a biological point of view a natural phenomenon. Given certain physical and mental conditions delinquency follows as simply natural behaviour; and, since this is contrary to the tenets of Society, the question arises, how best to deal with this matter. Obviously, the old answer, relying as it does upon mere punishment—retributive or deterrent—can no longer be accepted by civilised countries. One has only to read such works as Hans Fallada's *Wer Einmal aus dem Blechnapf Frisst* to realise fully the lot of one who has once been inside a

prison. Enlightened States now refuse to brand the child offender as a criminal ; they, profiting by past mistakes, seek and try to eradicate the cause.

In order to equip herself for the task of examining the whole question of the Juvenile Delinquent in Ireland and compiling an authoritative work on the subject Miss Green began to familiarise herself, not only with the modern English authorities, but with actual conditions in various parts of that country. Her conclusions are similar to those arrived at by Dr. Cyril Brunt in *The Young Delinquent*, where he says that, on the average, each delinquent child is the product of about a dozen subversive circumstances, one as a rule preponderating, and all conspiring to draw him into crime. The authors of *Young Offenders* put it rather more simply when they state their conclusions under three headings, (i) there are some children who will develop sound characters in almost any type of environment ; (ii) there are some who will go astray even in the best types so far as can be discovered ; and, (iii) there is a large intermediate section whose development will be profoundly affected by their environment. Professor Valentine arrives at a similar conclusion as a result of investigations among younger children. (*Vide : The Difficult Child and the Problem of Discipline*).

In this short treatise Miss Green has been able to do little more than touch on some of the material which presents itself to the investigator of this vast subject, and it is obvious that she intended to treat it in much greater detail at some future date. For example, with regard to the psychology of delinquency it is necessary to supplement her work by reading Shaffer's *The Psychology of Adjustment* and White's *Principles of Mental Hygiene* where he discusses the psychological factors underlying the popular attitude towards delinquency. She does, however, by indicating the trend of advance in England, help one to realise the necessity for the wide establishment of juvenile courts with the services of a psychiatrist or psychologist where delinquency will get the same objective consideration as is accorded to other conduct problems.

The manuscript has been edited and prepared for publication by Professor Fynne, who has also written a brilliant and penetrating Preface. Another interesting fact about the book is that the proceeds of sale go to assist the Civics Institute of Ireland to maintain its Dublin Playgrounds.

RONALD ANDERSON.

CHINESE COOKERY. A Hundred Practical Recipes by M. P. Lee with Decorations by Chiang Yee. Faber and Faber. 3s. 6d. net.

When one visited the Shanghai Emporium in Soho before the war, one saw in the sacks and drawers and baskets of that most exciting shop, such evocative things as dry lotus buds, water lily roots, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts and the Li Chee, both fresh and tinned, of which ambrosial fruit the Chinese poet Wang I. wrote

" Shell like a fisherman's red net
Fruit white and lustrous as a pearl
Lambent as the jewel of Ho, more strange
Than the saffron stone of Wu. . . ."

The poetic element, the grace and style of this ancient civilisation, are reflected in its cookery, and many Chinese authors have shown an interest in the culinary art of which even the menus are poems in themselves. This, for example, which I take from Countess Morphy's excellent essay on the subject :

"Golden Moons in a Silver sea (pigeon eggs in soup).
Jade growing out of Coral (cabbage shoots on crab roe) ;
Famous Scholars' Abandon (flakes of pork sausage and chicken)."

This was, of course, a pre-war meal, and one can imagine the Famous Scholars' Abandon when eating it, particularly if accompanied by a glass of fine dry sherry, and followed by the fragrantly perfumed Green Dragon tea served in delicately painted cups of porcelain.

One of the chief charms of Chinese food is that it never interferes with the conversation, which in ancient China was also considered an art. In these dishes there are no bones to be extracted from fowl or fish, nor is it necessary to fumble for salt or pepper, for everything is finely shredded and carefully seasoned before cooking. Mr. M. P. Lee's little book is a most helpful addition to the kitchen library at the present time, when there is scarcely any meat obtainable, for the Chinese are for the most part vegetable eaters, as we all have to be nowadays ; and the author has adapted many of the original Chinese recipes to the exigencies of war-time diet in England, where even rice is "on points." But for those willing to take a little time and trouble in following the directions, enjoyable and digestible meals may be produced. As those who have eaten it know "Delicious taste, stimulating smell, attractive colour and artistic form are the four essentials of good Chinese food." At a time like the present, when the harassed housewife, in a desperate attempt to solve the ever recurrent problem of what shall we eat to-day as we have no meat, no eggs, and no fish ? reads some of the prevalent recipes in the newspapers—which are usually so unattractive and so indigestible that she turns from them in intensified despair—this little book is welcome indeed, and the author should have the heartfelt thanks of all those who believe that daily life, though of necessity Spartan, should still retain some of the minor graces.

M. G.

YESTERDAY MORNING. By Lynn Doyle. Duckworth. 8/6 net.

Shortage of space allows no more than a brief note on Lynn Doyle's latest novel which was published last November. "Yesterday Morning" is a story of boyhood and adolescence. It begins with the first meeting of Nigel Berry and little Ellie Mearns and it ends with their engagement; but between the telling of these two events there are opportunities to describe in detail the encroachments of quite a few young women upon what are, in truth, Ellie's preserves. That first meeting introduces elements of dangerous romanticism which recur from time to time—dangerous, because to be convincing its sentimentalities demand complete conviction from the author, and Lynn Doyle's vision of life is too humourously realistic for that. Yet Nigel's knight-errantry and Ellie's innocent simplicity are more than mere parts handed to them for the opening scene: they

set the key for their subsequent behaviour. The story is a caustic but kindly commentary on the art of growing up no matter where, but its humour is enhanced by the presentation of youth expanding against the sober background of town and country life in respectable circles in Ulster half-a-century ago. The treatment is necessarily episodic yet the "bridgework" is so good that the narrative flows and the passage of time is never questioned. Two episodes are especially well done—the tragic little story of Joseph Meek, who speculated in the hope of being able to marry and support his mother in comfort also, and the episode involving the bookmaker and his friends, with its vivid sketch of Nancy, "an indomitable spirit of gaiety and pleasure in a fragile, bewitching body." There are some vivid types, such as Mr. Heeme, general manager of the Bank in which Nigel is employed; or John Dobie and Sarah Molly waging unceasing religious warfare with weapons of invective incredible to any who have not lived in the North of Ireland. There are others whose characters, more gently suggested, linger in the mind—Joseph Meek and his Jenny; Mrs. Whidder, the landlady, and those three lovable ladies who lived and died at Bentubber. And if the heroine, Nigel's little "Princess of Ballyhur," while perhaps not too good to be true, remains too palely childish to be exciting, there is excitement enough in her principal foil, Beattie Heeme, flamboyant, intelligent and extremely forthcoming.

W.P.M.

WORTHIES OF THOMAND: being a compendium of short lives of the most famous men and women of Limerick and Clare to the present day. 1st series, collected and edited by Robert Herbert. (Published by the author at Pery Square, Limerick, price 2/-).

In this unpretentious little volume Mr. Robert Herbert has made a welcome addition to the good work which he is doing in the cause of Irish bibliographical, and biographical literature. It is, as he tells us in a brief foreword, the first of a projected series, the last of which will contain "a general title-page, an alphabetical index, and complete list of the authorities consulted." In this initial number Mr. Herbert has thrown a wide net, and it includes in addition to names already familiar in the annals of literature, art and science, that of, for example, Nicholas Thomas Arthur, since "his life gives us many intimate details of the Limerick of that period" (1405-1465). That is a sound principle, and one which is, I think, essential in the compiling of any work of this kind. I sincerely hope that Mr. Herbert's example will be followed by scholars and collectors in every part of Ireland, for it is by such a method only that we can ever hope to procure that Irish Dictionary of Biography for which we have waited so long.